

TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

> **50% ATTRITION RISK**

NOT WORKING AS **EXPECTED**

LESSON OF MEH

OVERWHELMING CHAOS

ANGER & HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: ANGER AND HOPELESSNESS

Foster parents do this because they want to help children, but as you've seen in the previous learnings, the experience can be very challenging.

Those challenges can lead to feelings of anger, hopelessness, and despair for these families who are trying to help.



ANGER & HOPELESSNESS

Many foster parents are determined to create change for the better for these children, only to find a complex and difficult to navigate system. Some come to the conclusion that they are part of the dysfunction, they are part of the harm to these children, and become hopeless about whether change can happen.

Additionally, perhaps through the previous pages you have caught on to the fact that foster parents have a plethora of reasons to feel frustrated. And when that frustration combines with a feeling of voicelessness, often the volume can start to rise. This creates a "rant culture" of sorts where Facebook groups and meetings are filled with frustration, anger and tears when sharing fostering experiences.



When asked how they would rate their hopefulness that the system can change, the average response was 6/10.



I have heard so many things about how "they" are looking into this, or might try that, or legislature said this and haven't seen proof of any of it happening or significant improvement in the last 10 years. Instead caseloads just seem to get bigger and things just seem to keep going downhill in an overall sense. I have very little faith in government or the ability to change its processes. So while there is always hope, and I will continue to hold out hope for a better future and a system that does less harm to our kids, it's not as high as it once was.



ANGER & HOPELESSNESS

While we completely understand the frustration (trust us, we've all been there or are currently there), one thing we have noted is that the levels of anger make it harder to know how widespread a problem is. Is the issue affecting a significant portion of foster parents? Or is it a small percentage, but those who are impacted are upset and vocal? When it comes to prioritizing problems and allocating resources, it is important to get a clearer picture of how widespread some problems are.

Additionally, in the future we want to work to better understand how hopelessness is impacting overall behavior, especially interactions. As you can see in the quote below, an organization in Kenya is using a similar idea to improve their governmental systems. What they found was that hopelessness produced corruption. How is this playing out in the foster care system?

Also, we highly recommend taking the 10 minutes to watch the TED talk referenced below. Especially if you think that this Lab idea is cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs. Link available in the reference section.



But when we dug deeper, we didn't find corruption in the classic sense: slimy gangsters lurking in the darkness, waiting to grease the palms of their friends. What we found was an overwhelming sense of helplessness. Our government was sick, because government employees felt helpless. They felt that they were not empowered to drive change. And when people feel stuck and helpless, they stop seeing their role in a bigger system. They start to think the work they do doesn't matter in driving change. And when that happens, things slow down, fall through the cracks and inefficiencies flourish.7

Charity Wayua TED Talk, November 2016



OPPORTUNITIES & CURIOSITIES



But I'm asking you to consider data — all kinds of data — as the beginning of the conversation and not the end. Because data alone will never give us a solution.6

Giorgia Lupi TED Talk, March 2017

So now what do we do with all of this information?

Now we start again. If you remember from the beginning, continuous improvement is a cycle - clarify, try, learn. The data we gathered should produce a list of curiosities and opportunities that then guide the next phase of the cycle.



OPPORTUNITIES & CURIOSITIES

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OVERWHELMING **CHAOS**

ANGER & **HOPELESSNESS** Here is our list of the opportunities and curiosities that came out of this Phase:

- 1. How do we quantify hope? What about chaos? How do we do a better job of measuring these two outcomes so that we can reduce the contributing factors?
- Hopelessness isn't just limited to the foster family, it infuses all 2. parts of this system. How we increase the levels of hope between all parties? How do we help the feelings of partnership and forward-momentum in all conversations?
- 3 Looking at the reasons that foster parents are unlikely to renew their license, how do we further quantify disrespect or retaliation? Not just that we measure the feeling, but how do we capture the incidents that raise this feeling and help to reduce them?
- 4. How can we build trust with those around us in order to collaborate on change?
- How do we take the Lesson of Meh and do a better job of 5. capturing foster family satisfaction? How can we combine tools like sentiment analysis?
- How do we continue to measure health and well-being? 6.
- How do we quantify the impact of foster families not being 7. invited to hearings or meetings?
- 8. What are some of the competing responsibilities that keep social workers from updating foster parents about things like hearings? How do we measure and find solutions?
- 9. How much is permanency delayed by some of these things that aren't working as expected? What is the impact on the family, but also the systemic impact?

We have plenty more questions, but right now, we want you to focus on one - what is your role and responsibility in this? How can you take these learnings and make a difference in your sphere of influence? Remember that you aren't supposed to fix everything, but to clarify, try, and learn. What is one thing you can do this week?



WHAT NOW?

Where do we go from here? Well, great question. As we review our lessons, it seems clear to us that The Lab is an idea worth pursuing. Our tribe is growing and we are all starting to look at the problem in new ways.

Our mission has clarified over the last few months and we are planning to move forward with a focus on pursuing better data and better conversations.

We hope we have demonstrated how insightful data can help to guide conversations about finding solutions. We need to expand both the depth and reach of our Pool, as well as provide them with different methods of submitting data.

And more importantly, we want to help create opportunities for better conversations.



28 out of 32 responses to the question "What was the most satisfying part of participating in The Lab?" said that being heard and participating in change was the best part of the process.

What starts to happen to problems like hopelessness, exhaustion, distrust, and anger when we simply provide an opportunity for people to use their voices? And when those in power have access to a wider selection of data, how will that impact their chances of truly listening and responding?

We want to help develop a foster care culture that is marked by hope, creativity, and change. We are still ironing out the specifics, but for now, let us say that we have greatly appreciated every survey response, question, and conversation. We appreciate you making it through this (long) document and we are hopeful for what is to come.

To keep up with us, follow us on Facebook or sign up for our email list (available on our website). If you have specific questions about anything in the document or would like to talk further, email us at labstaff@fosterinnovationlab.com.

Cheers to change,

Lori Mackenzie Patty Shannon



- 1: DSHS Continuum of Care Report, December 2016
- 2: Washington State Office of the Ombudsman
- 3: The Children's Administration Practices and Procedures Guide
- 4: The Children's Administration Practices and Procedures Guide
- 5: Downloadable Caregiver Report to the Court
- 6: Lupia, Giorgia. (March, 2017). TED Talk: How we can find ourselves in data. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/giorgia-lupi-how-we-can-find-ourselves-in-data/transcript?language=en
- 7: Wayua, Charity. (November, 2016). TED Talk: A few ways to fix a government. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/charity_wayua_a_few_ways_to_fix_an_ailing_government



GLOSSARY

1624- CAFPT

Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 1624 was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate on April 20, 2007. This bill requires regional and statewide quarterly meetings between Children's Administration (CA), foster parents, and the Foster Parent Association of Washington State (FPAWS). CAPTF is the Children's Administration Foster Parent Team, charged with organizing these meetings.

Agile Development

a set of principles for software development under which requirements and solutions evolve through the collaborative effort of self-organizing cross-functional teams.

CASA/GAL

CASA/GAL volunteers are appointed by judges to watch over and advocate for abused and neglected children, to make sure they don't get lost in the overburdened legal and social service system or languish in inappropriate group or foster homes. Volunteers stay with each case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. For many abused children, their

CASA/GAL volunteer will be the one constant adult presence in their lives.

Caregiver

Foster parent, relative or fictive kin caring for a foster child.

Caregiver Report to the Court

A form to be filled out by the caregiver regarding a foster child in their care. This form is the main opportunity for a caregiver to share any information about the child in their care and their needs to

the court.

^{*} Note that cach glossary term is a link where you can find more information - if they links aren't working, visit our website.



Children's Administration Public child welfare agency for the state of Washington. Works with children and families to identify their needs and develop a plan for services that support families and assure the safety and well-being of children. These services are designed to reduce the risk of abuse, find safe alternatives to out-of-home placement and assure safety and permanency for children in out-of-home care.

Hackathon

Event in which computer programmers and others involved in software development, including subject matter experts collaborate intensively on projects.

Continuous Improvement An ongoing effort to improve products, services, or processes. These efforts can seek "incremental" improvement over time or "breakthrough" improvement all at once

Department of Children, Youth and Families

Governor Inslee tasked a Commission with creating a blueprint for a new agency to have a cabinet-level department that will align state policies across agencies and have accountability for better using the state's resources to improve the lives of children and families. This new agency will ensure there is a focus on the well-being of children and reduce barriers to improving services so that better outcomes can be achieved. This bill has passed the House and currently is with the Senate.

Design Thinking

A methodology used by designers to solve complex problems, and find desirable solutions for clients. Design Thinking draws upon logic, imagination, intuition, and systemic reasoning, to explore possibilities of what could be-and to create desired outcomes that benefit the end user (the customer)

Fictive Kin

Individuals not related by blood or marriage but have a significant relationship with an individual that takes on the characteristics of a family relationship.

Foster Parent Pool

Our faithful group of foster parents who indicated they were willing to help and have been taking weekly and monthly surveys from the start of our experiment.

Health and Safety Visits

Face-to-face visits with children who have an open case with CA and regular visits with out-of-home caregivers and all known parents provides opportunity for ongoing assessments of the health, safety, and well-being of children. Regular visits with out-of-home caregivers increase opportunities to monitor child safety, can promote permanency, and provides the worker with information they can share with the parent

Permanency

Resolution to child's temporary legal status (being placed in out-of-home or foster care). The department has timelines that it is supposed to adhere to.

Placement Desk

Specially trained individuals with DSHS who place foster children needing homes with the appropriate placement.

Private Agency

Some foster parents choose to obtain their foster parent license through a private agency (many for a fee). Private agencies can provide additional staff, support and resources for a foster family that many times the state cannot.



GLOSSARY

RCW

Revised Code of Washington- the compilation of all permanent laws now in force. It is a collection of Session Laws (enacted by the Legislature, and signed by the Governor, or enacted via the initiative process), arranged by topic, with amendments added and repealed laws removed.

Response Bias

Also called survey bias is the tendency of a person to answer questions on a survey untruthfully or misleadingly. For example, they may feel pressure to give answers that are socially acceptable..

State Licensed

Foster families can become licensed through the state directly. This route does not cost any money and when they choose this route, there is very limited outside help available if they have difficulty understanding the system. Most areas have local support groups run through a non profit organization that can provide some assistance.

Visitation

Court ordered contact between children and biological parents (also for foster children and siblings who are not placed in the same home). To maintain family connections and bonds.

WAC

Washington Administrative Code- Regulations of executive branch agencies are issued by authority of statutes. Like legislation and the Constitution, regulations are a source of primary law in Washington State. The WAC codifies the regulations and arranges them by subject or agency.

From: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA)

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 6/13/2017 6:24:24 PM

Subject: FW: The Foster Innovation Lab

Attachments: Foster Innovation Lab - Phase One Report.pdf

This is what the foster innovation lab is

From: Waterhouse, Meri (DSHS/CA) Sent: Monday, June 12, 2017 2:13 PM

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA) <strusj@dshs.wa.gov>
Cc: Geiger, Barbara (DSHS/CA) <GeigeBL@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: The Foster Innovation Lab

Shannon Mead, one of the old 1624 Reps from Region 2 is one of the leads on this. There are 4 foster moms involved. Shannon shared info with 1624 about the work they were starting at a 1624 meeting some time ago. They have achieved non-profit status and have consulted with some state representatives (don't know which ones). I do think foster parents who have been contacted to participate in RDA's foster parent survey are confusing the Foster Innovation Lab's questions with the RDA survey. A few foster parents when contacted by RDA, state they just took the survey.

Their goal is to work together with CA to creatively and collaboratively tackle current foster parenting challenges. Their premise is on working towards small incremental changes by tackling small problems, one at a time. Their concern is based on the survey that indicates over 50% of the families who participated are either undecided or unlikely to renew their foster care license.

They've gathered info from the KCTS-9 Susanna Ray, "Crisis in Foster Care Report", DSHS Continuum of Care Report, Washington's Ombuds' Office, CA's Practice & Procedure Guide and foster parents they have surveyed.

They listed opportunities and curiosities that came from their Phase I work:

- 1. How do we quantify hope? What about chaos? How do we do a better job of measuring these two outcomes so that we can reduce the contributing factors?
- 2. Hopelessness isn't just limited to the foster family, it infuses all parts of this system. How we increase the levels of hope between all parties? How do we help the feelings of partnership and forward-momentum in all conversations?
- 3. Looking at the reasons that foster parents are unlikely to renew their license, how do we further quantify disrespect or retaliation? Not just that we measure the feeling, but how do we capture the incidents that raise this feeling and help to reduce them?
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- 8. What are some of the competing responsibilities that keep social workers from updating foster parents about things like hearings? How do we measure and find solutions?
- 9. How much is permanency delayed by some of these things that aren't working as expected? What is the impact on the family, but also the systemic impact?

Goal: to retain foster homes and help stabilize the system. Plan: move forward with a focus on pursuing better data and better conversations.

Meri Waterhouse, Program Manager

Foster Care Recruitment & Retention

Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

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360-902-8035 - phone

waterml@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

Consider becoming a foster parent – kids from your community who have been abused and neglected need your help. Will it be easy? Not every day. . . Will it be worth it? Absolutely!

www.dshs.wa.gov/fosterparents

From: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA) Sent: Monday, June 12, 2017 1:04 PM

To: Waterhouse, Meri (DSHS/CA) < waterml@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: The Foster Innovation Lab

You ever heard of these folks?

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Monday, June 12, 2017 8:38 AM

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA) < strusj@dshs.wa.gov ce: Harder, Diana (DSHS/CA) < hardedx@dshs.wa.gov

Subject: FW: The Foster Innovation Lab

Hi..

Just making sure that there are no expectations about engaging with this group that I am unaware of. If there are not, I will support Joel's position of non-engagement. Thanks, C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel
Director: Field Operations
Children's Administration
lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

360-902-7982

From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2017 10:13 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA) < LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Fwd: The Foster Innovation Lab

Hi Connie -

Debbie forwarded this to us. I've not heard of this group as there are many entities out there that are doing different things "for foster care".

Perhaps you've heard about them? I don't intend on following up with them; nor will I ask Debbie to do anything

with the group.

Just letting you know.

Joel Odimba, PhD, ACSW / Regional Administrator

Children's Administration, Region 3

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

(Tacoma) <u>253-983-6258</u>

(Olympia) 360-725-6280/ joel.odimba@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: "Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA)" < <u>LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov</u>>

Subject: FW: The Foster Innovation Lab

Date: 07 June 2017 15:43

To: "Devoy, Peggy (DSHS/CA)" < <u>DevoyPR@dshs.wa.gov</u>>, "Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)"

<<u>ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov</u>> Anyone heard of this group?

From: Patty FL [mailto:patty@fosterinnovationlab.com]

Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2017 10:42 AM

To: Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA) < LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: The Foster Innovation Lab

Hi Debbie,

Becca Curzon sent me your address that she collected at the Foster Parent and Area Administrator Forum. Thank you!

From a deep desire for change, The Foster Innovation Lab was formed by 4 foster and adoptive moms. We have spent the last 10 months working together to build a tribe of like-minded people who not only desire change but are willing to step up and participate. We are delighted that you have signed up and are requesting additional information about our work. I am attaching a copy of the report we generated from 6 months of data collected in both weekly and monthly surveys from a dedicated group of foster parents.

Your address will also be added to our mailing list so you will get consistent updates on our progress. We would love to hear any feedback you might have as we spend time this summer developing our Phase II. Please take a moment to check out our website and join our FaceBook page.

I would love to hear from you!

Patty and the rest of the team at The Lab



thefosterinnovationlab.com



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Foster Innovation Lab exists to inspire positive change within foster care by creating a culture of innovation, creativity, and shared learning.

We do this by clarifying challenges, facilitating collaboration, and promoting better conversations.

This document provides an overview of our six-month alpha phase, affectionately called Phase One. We have used a show-and-tell approach to demonstrate how business principles, such as <u>continuous improvement</u>, can have an impact on the current challenges facing the Washington state foster care system.

Over the past six months we have collected piles of data, clarified problems, tested solutions - all with the goal of sparking a culture that embraces creativity and collaborative learning. This report reviews the seven Key Learnings that have come out of Phase One.

- **Learning 1**: We started The Lab to see if we could grow a tribe of people interested in solving problems differently. That tribe is growing.
- **Learning 2**: Progress with the foster care community is slowed by exhaustion, distrust, and large gaps in existing communication systems.
- **Learning 3**: Our data shows that over 50% of families are either undecided or unlikely to renew their foster care license.
- **Learning 4**: Important communication points, such as hearings and <u>Health and Safety visits</u>, aren't working as might be expected.
- **Learning 5:** Our satisfaction ratings all came back in the midrange, which likely reflects that we weren't asking the right questions.
- **Learning 6**: Foster parents expect this experience to be hard, but sometimes it is the unexpected <u>visitation</u> and scheduling chaos that pushes families over the edge.
- **Learning 7**: The anger and hopelessness that pervade the system are understandable, but also create an obstacle for driving change and are an important area to focus efforts.

These learnings are not surprising, nor are they the end of the story. These are themes that have impacted the foster care system for decades. By looking at them in a new way - with data that digs beneath the surface and an approach that focuses on small, continuous changes - we are hopeful that we can truly begin to drive innovation.



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SPOILER ALERT

If you've been around the foster care system for a while, you are not going to find the information in this report surprising. The same problems have been around for years.

Very few of the known issues have been fully quantified and categorized, which is what we have started to do. You can't fix what you can't measure.

In the following pages, we are going to take a look at some of the most common problems through a different lens. When it comes to actually making a difference in changing this system, the key is to start tackling the small problems one at a time.



OUR STORY

We are four current and former foster moms that feel passionately about helping foster children. We came to a point where fostering alone didn't feel like enough. We watched helplessly as the consequences of a broken system impacted the kids in our care. We wanted to see change so desperately and then wondered if we felt this way, surely there must be others who felt the same. Out of this passion and curiosity, The Lab was born.



Describing the journey to create The Foster Innovation Lab is challenging. If you've found yourself perplexed by what we're doing, you aren't alone. We've had those moments ourselves.

Over the course of many online hangouts after our kids went to bed (we have 9 children between us), we clarified our vision and forged ahead. The Foster Innovation Lab began out of Shannon's experiences as a foster mom, her time on the 1624 board, a Hackathon at the White House, and her professional consulting experience - all of which shaped her perspective about how systematic change can take place. Those experiences paired well with Lori's business and writing skills, Patty's background in nonprofit finance, and my experience in education, curriculum development, and nonprofit leadership. Together, we are a dynamic team.

This combination of parenting and professional experiences led to a willingness to stand in the uncomfortable tension of not completely understanding, but recognizing a deep need for a shift in the experience of out-of-home caregivers. We had to move beyond simply sharing our individual stories and seeing the brokenness; we had to enter in and engage in the improvement process.

Over the last nine months, a lot has changed. We've become an official nonprofit organization, consulted with state representatives, and built a pool of foster parents who are willing to provide survey after survey. In many ways, our data and experiences over the last 9 months have reinforced what we thought we knew, but much has challenged our ideas and led us to ask additional questions. We hope it does the same for you.

- Mackenzie

THREE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT US:

INDEPENDENT:

We are unfunded and independent of Children's Administration or any other organization. This was a deliberate decision, and although we have and will continue collaborating with other organizations, the flexibility of going in any direction that our research and data might lead was important to us.

WILLING TO FAIL:

Our attitude throughout Phase One has been "let's give it a shot." We have given it our best and are looking forward to sharing both the successes and failures with everyone, because it is the failures that are often the most helpful.

SERIOUS ABOUT BEING INFORMAL:

Our tone in this document (and everything we do) is more informal than you might expect. We believe that collaborative, creative conversations are the key to change. And when it comes to starting conversations, we far prefer to be informal and friendly.



THE CURRENT SITUATION

The problems within foster care are messy and overwhelming. Solving them is about as straightforward as herding squirrels.

With a squirt gun. In a thunderstorm.

After spending a considerable amount of time trying to help solve those problems through official channels, we started The Lab to try something different. We wondered what would happen if we created a way to demonstrate incremental, measured improvement methods that are common within private industry, but relatively unknown within foster care.

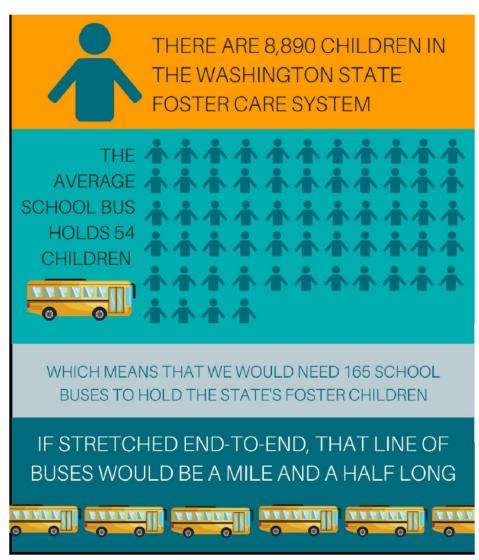
We chose these methods because they are slow, deliberate, and easily adjusted. There is no magic bullet for foster care. Instead, we need to work together to creatively and collaboratively tackle the current challenges.

Like any faithful believers in agility, our goals have shifted throughout this process. During our initial six-month alpha phase, we have watched, listened, and wondered.

And like many of you, we have also questioned whether the system can really change. We've sometimes felt overwhelmed and hopeless in our efforts, but we've continued to push forward because, here's the thing:

There are currently 8,890¹ kids in foster care in Washington state.

So sure. We are tired and stressed, but we have a choice about whether we remain connected to this system. These 8,890 kids do not. They are stuck and they deserve better.





THE CURRENT SITUATION

Washington State has a foster care crisis. There are approximately 5,144² licensed foster homes in Washington state. And while the math might seem to work at first glance (assuming that each home could take about 2 kids), the reality is that the numbers don't work. Many of those homes are full, or not taking additional children, or not qualified to take some of the highest-need placements. The result is that placement desks are struggling to find homes for children, and unfortunately, that means that some of our state's most vulnerable children are spending nights in DSHS offices, hotels, or with foster parents who agree to take them for one night only.

This further traumatizes that child and is stretching the system's resources to the max.



The number of nights kids that stayed in hotels ncreased more than seven-fold over the last ear. In the past 12 months there were 883 lacement exceptions involving 221 children, compared to just 120 exceptions involving 72 kids in the previous year, according to the state Office of Family and Children's Ombuds, which handles complaints about the foster care system. Nearly all occurred in Region 2 last year, with 57 percent in King County. Almost all were hotel stays, but in a few cases kids also stayed in DSHS offices.

In addition to the cost of the hotel room, the state must pay two social workers, and sometimes a security guard, who stay awake all night supervising the children."

Allegra Abramo & Susanna Ray https://kcts9.org/programs/system-in-crisis/foster-car e-crisis

Foster children are spending the night in hotels and bouncing from home to home.

They deserve better. A child's experiences in foster care affect the rest of their lives, the lives of their future children, and generations to come.

This affects all of us, whether we are connected to foster care or not.

Let's talk about what can be done.



THE CURRENT SITUATION

THERE IS NO MAGIC BULLET FOR **FIXING FOSTER CARE**

If created, the transition to the new Department of Children, Youth, and

Families is a great step. However, we also need to address the current culture of fear within the system, in which fear overrides creativity and there is far more contention than collaboration. Fixing the cultural challenges will be a slow, steady process.

But it is not impossible by any means.

We built The Lab to demonstrate some of the business principles that are used by leading companies. Each of these concepts can directly and successfully start to unravel the problems facing the system.

We have built The Lab as an experiment in show-and-tell. Sure, we can talk about how these methods could be helpful, but isn't it always better to demonstrate?

KEY CONCEPTS

Continuous Improvement:

Originally developed to improve manufacturing, continuous improvement is focused on making small, iterative changes in order to improve overall functioning.

Agile Development:

Likewise, agile development is also focused on small, iterative changes.

Design Thinking:

A method of simplifying and solving complex problems by relying on creative, visual methods.

Collaborative Learning:

Shared knowledge is the most powerful knowledge. Collaborative learning means that we work to combine the learnings of many in order to move us all forward.

OUR PROCESS HAS FOLLOWED THREE STEPS:

CLARIFY THE PROBLEM

EXPERIMENT WITH SOLUTIONS **LEARN AND** SHARE

REPEAT

CLARIFY THE PROBLEM

We did this in two ways:

- 1. First, we built a pool of foster parents who completed surveys over the course of six months in order to build a foundation of data to drive our efforts.
- 2. Second, we started by focusing in on three specific user stories. A user story is simply a specific and clear problem that needs to be solved.

USER STORIES			
Visitation Scheduling	Delivery of Caregiver Reports	Access to Childcare	
As a foster parent, I want to be adequately notified of changes to the visitation plan, so that I can plan my family's schedule accordingly.	As a foster parent, I want to receive confirmation that my caregiver report to the court was received by the judge/commissioner, so that I know my voice was heard.	As a foster parent, I need to be able to find childcare that accepts state payment, so that I can continue to foster and keep my job.	

EXPERIMENT WITH SOLUTIONS

As mentioned, The Lab is an experiment in and of itself. We were testing to see what would happen if we tried a show-and-tell method. Additionally, we ran experiments specifically to see if we could impact the user stories. For a full description of each experiment, please visit our website. We will share about how those experiments went in our second Key Learning.

LEARN AND SHARE

And finally, the entire point is to learn and share and then begin the cycle again. Our hope is to help build a tribe of people who are willing to risk, quick to embrace the learnings that come from failure, and committed to building a community of collaborative learning.

We have walked out of Phase One with seven Key Learnings. As you will see, these Learnings provide insight, but they also create questions. Because good data should build better questions - and the cycle of clarifying, experimenting, and learning can start again.



TRIBE IS GROWING

GAPS

EXPECTED

OVERWHELMING CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: OUR TRIBE IS GROWING

One of our big questions in Phase 1 was simply, "If we provide an example of using continuous improvement within the foster care system, will anyone find it interesting?"

From what we can tell, the answer is yes. We are slowly building a tribe that is engaged and interested.



OUR TRIBE IS GROWING

A GROWING CURIOSITY

Our core goal in Phase One was not huge numbers, but instead we wanted to create pockets of curiosity. We wanted a core group of people who were intrigued and interested in learning more. From that standpoint, we are very please with the numbers below, which show us that a our tribe is growing and engaged.

If you are one of those subscribers or followers, thank you, we're glad you're here. If you don't subscribe, head on over to our website and jump on the bandwagon. All the cool kids are doing it.

ENGAGEMENT METRICS				
637	308	43.4%	239	
website visitors*	email subscribers	average email open rate**	Facebook followers	

^{*}Visitor total begins on December 1st in order to exclude traffic from Pool recruiting.

THREE CHEERS FOR THE POOL

Furthermore, our amazing pool of foster parents was committed and consistent about providing both weekly and monthly surveys.

92 pool members submitted:				
11	635	5	267	
weekly	weekly	monthly	monthly	
surveys	survey	surveys	survey	
	responses		responses	

^{**} Industry average is 20.07%. Also, email open rate excludes Pool emails in order to avoid skewing the data.



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST, AND COMMUNICATION GAPS

A combination of exhaustion and distrust, as well as gaps in existing communication channels hindered progress - and will be a challenge in future efforts.



EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST, COMMUNICATION

EXHAUSTION

Many people within the foster care system are completely exhausted. Shocking, right? We know, this is a fairly obvious statement, but when considering solutions, it's important to lay out all of the contributing factors, even the obvious ones. Throughout Phase One we continuously saw that even when people wanted to get involved to help drive change, feelings of being exhausted and emotionally overwhelmed would sometimes get in the way.

DISTRUST

Furthermore, mixed with that exhaustion is a deep sense of distrust. Especially because we were new and unknown, we saw a lot of early interest, but hesitation to fully commit. We heard messages of distrust in several ways:

- Who are you and are you connected to Children's Administration? Unfortunately, there is a lot of fear within foster care, which is a large part of why we were careful with our identities. That fear went both ways, as early audiences were suspicious of our intentions and whether we were connected to CA.
- How do I know that this is going to make a difference? Perhaps even more prevalent was a distrust of whether any time or energy invested in The Lab would actually result in change. The problems within the system have been the same for decades, and understandably there is a hesitance to spend time or energy trying to make a difference.

COMMUNICATION

Communication within foster care is challenging, to say the least. There is no one way to communicate with foster parents. Some are licensed through the state; some are licensed through private agencies and they might receive information differently. Some information is disseminated through Facebook groups, some through email lists, some through foster parent support groups, and some directly through social worker interactions.

Additionally, sometimes the answers to the same question vary greatly based on who you ask. Different regions, counties, supervisors, and social workers at times provide different answers to the same question. For example, when we were fine-tuning our experiments, we spent a lot of time confirming policy around things like submitting a caregiver report. We would receive different answers based on who we asked, what county they were in, and what role they had.

Again, none of these three points is surprising, but when we sat down for our retrospective conversations, these themes came up again and again, which makes them important to note and consider when planning future efforts.



EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST, COMMUNICATION

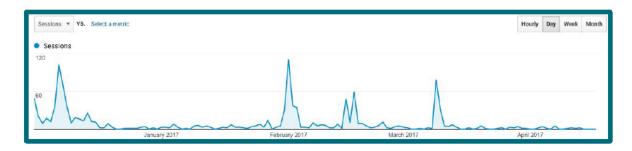
IMPACT

These dynamics had some important impacts on Phase One and will be a key consideration as we plan Phase Two. Two core areas of impact:

Pool Participants: One of the first places we noticed the impact was in building our foster parent pool. We had almost 200 foster parents originally raise their hands to join the pool. However, in order to guarantee case confidentiality and data quality, we asked all participants to watch a 15-minute training video prior to participating. Only 92 caregivers completed that training.

Volunteers: We had quite a few volunteers raise their hands and offer to help with everything from experiments to analysis, but unfortunately, the majority were unable to follow through as planned. (If you are one of them, don't worry, we completely understand. No blame here, just unpacking the process.)

Because of this, we have made several adjustments throughout the process based on our internal bandwidth. One of those things, as you likely noticed if you are a subscriber, is that we almost completely stopped sharing content at two points. As you can see below in our web traffic, visits to our site are directly tied to the content we are pushing out (as expected). In both January and April we produced very little content as we worked to finalize both experiment design and analysis, respectively.



We saw a similar dynamic play out in our experiments. There was a spike of traffic upon the announcement of the experiments, as well as smaller spikes each time we pushed a reminder. Unfortunately, that traffic would level out within hours.

These traffic flows were telling us that we needed to approach this differently. We were not getting enough traffic to get statistically-relevant data without making constant noise. Not only did we not have enough bandwidth to constantly push content, but we definitely did not want to be another source of obnoxious noise. So we eventually decided to pause experiments and take this as a learning.



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

50% ATTRITION RISK

EXPECTED

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: 50% ATTRITION RISK

The number of foster homes is already alarmingly low, and if things go really poorly, we could be looking at an attrition rate of up to 50%.

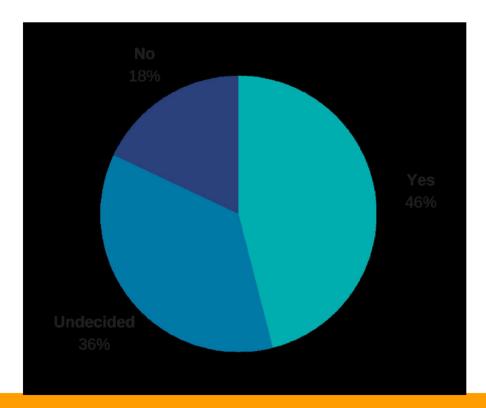


RISK OF 50% ATTRITION

If a large part of the current crisis is that there are not currently enough homes for the kids that need them, an important part of stabilizing the system is to increase the number of licensed homes. While recruiting new homes is always important, it is more important to retain the existing homes.

Let's take a look at what we found about whether foster parents intend to stay, as well as the reasons behind their choices.

WE ASKED, "ARE YOU PLANNING TO RENEW YOUR LICENSE?":





54% answered Unlikely, Highly Unlikely, or Undecided



Crises were happening so fast and we were not able to get services and things addressed fast enough. The foster child, our children, our community, and our marriage were greatly affected and it could have potentially all been prevented if we knew more of her back story.



RISK OF 50% ATTRITION

TOP FIVE REASONS:

LIKELY TO RENEW	
Helping the kids	37%
Good caseworkers	20%
High need for caregivers	17%
Making a difference	10%
Long-term placement	10%
UNDECIDED	
Permanency takes too long	27%
Lack of support	27%
Lied to by the state	13%
Lack of information about the kids	13%
Frustration with the system	7%
UNLIKELY TO RENEW	
Disrespect	22%
Retaliation	22%
Visitation Issues	17%
Best interest of the bio parents over best interest of the child	13%
Lack of communication	9%

^{*} These categories arose out of our open text analysis, which we will explain further in Learning 5.



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

> **50% ATTRITION RISK**

NOT WORKING AS **EXPECTED**

CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

Foster parents have several key points of contact with their social workers, judges, and other important team members. As you can imagine, it is critically important that these points of contact are functioning properly, since they are the main way that information about both the child's well-being and case updates are transferred. However, our data shows that there may be some very important gaps.



HEALTH AND SAFETY VISITS:

For those unfamiliar with foster care, Children's Administration defines Health and Safety visits as face-to-face visits with children who have an open case with Children's Administration and regular visits with out-of-home caregivers and all known parents provides opportunity for ongoing assessments of the health, safety, and well-being of children. Regular visits with out-of-home caregivers increase opportunities to monitor child safety, can promote permanency, and provides the worker with information they can share with the parent. Regular visits with parents can provide the parent with reassuring information about how his/her child is doing in placement, monitors progress with services and case goals, shorten length-of-stay and achieve permanency more quickly.³



32

comments indicating a positive experience

52

comments indicating that the visit was done by a courtesy worker, at an alternate location, or that the social worker didn't have information available



The only chance I have for updates on the progress of the case for the child in our home is during the Health and Safety visits. These visits aren't just about the child and the appropriateness of our home, but a time to exchange information. Unfortunately, in our case my social worker has only come to our home once in 16 months. Twelve of the sixteen visits have happened at our foster daughter's daycare when I have not been notified and therefore not present. Three of them took place in a DSHS lobby so she could make sure the child was safe and healthy, but did not provide an opportunity for me to talk about her progress or any concerns. This has left me without information and feeling frustrated as the case has dragged on.

To be clear, I am not criticizing my social worker. She has a caseload with more than double the acceptable number of cases and has to do at least 8 health and safety visits in one day in order to accomplish all that her job requires. What I am saying is that I don't feel communicated with. I don't know what's going on in our foster daughter's case, and I therefore don't know how to best support and advocate for her.



An 80% completion rate is concerning, but what caught our attention is those 52 comments that mention an alternate location, courtesy worker, or that the social worker did not have information about the case available.



Why are we concerned about this detail? Shouldn't we just focus on getting 80% closer to 100%?

No, and allow us to digress for a moment to explain. Foster parents are not considered "legal party to the case." Which means that from a legal standpoint, they do not have the same standing as biological parents, social workers, or CASA/GALs.

The result of this standing is that foster parents are outside of the communication process. They receive very little background about the child they are caring for and are only notified about things like hearings or shared planning meetings when their social worker notifies them.

To put it another way, the people who have the most responsibility for providing direct care for the kids often have the least amount of information and are the last to know about important meetings or hearings. One of the key options they have for getting updates is at Health and Safety visits, so if that visit is held elsewhere or by a social worker unfamiliar with the case, the visit might happen, but that foster parent is not receiving information.

Not only is it important that the well-being of the child is being confirmed at these visits, but the conversation between social worker and foster parent is essential to ongoing retention. In the 32 comments that mentioned the Health and Safety visit was a pleasant experience, it was clear that the experience made the foster parents feel valued and respected.



Whether this data is an accurate representation of the statewide Health & Safety experience remains to be determined.

Phase 1 of The Lab was an alpha (or a pilot, depending on which word tickles your fancy). Our sample size is relatively small and skews to the western side of the state.

However, it is more insight than existed previously and definitely enough to be considered directional. Directional data is like a strange smell in your refrigerator. It tells us that there is potentially something important happening and more investigation needs to happen.

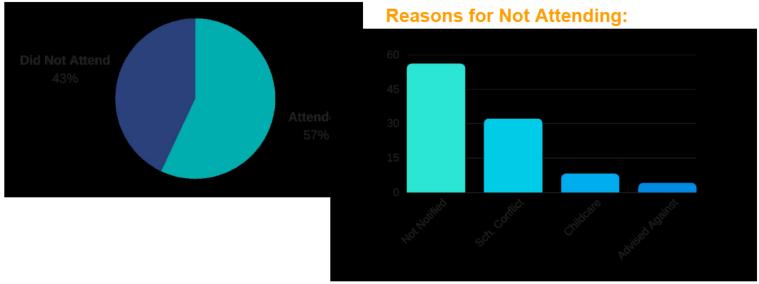


SHARED PLANNING MEETINGS

Children's Administration uses a Shared Planning model to work with families in addressing a variety of needs across the life of a case. The Shared Planning model includes families, youth, relatives, fictive kin, natural supports and others who can assist in the development of a plan that prioritizes child safety and meets the support and service needs of parents, children and caregivers. An inclusive model provides an opportunity for information to be shared, case plans to be developed and decisions made that will support the safety, permanency, and well-being of children.4

* Similarly, Family Team Decision Making meetings bring all parties together to discuss movement of children. For the sake of clarity, both types of meetings have been grouped in our data and explanations.

60 TOTAL MEETINGS REPORTED





It is frustrating when we are the ones who spend the most time and energy with the foster children but are not included, and often not involved at all, in big decisions regarding their future.

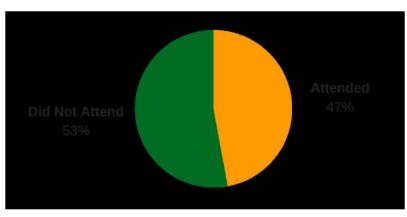


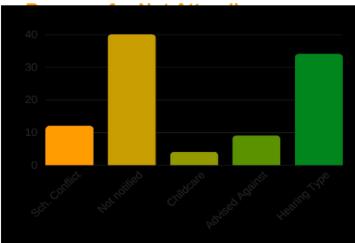
HEARINGS

There are several types of hearings for children in out-of-home care. Some happen on a regular rotation, generally every six months. Some are scheduled last-minute, such as when an emergency occurs or a party petitions the judge regarding something like travel. We won't go into extensive detail about each, since that is outside of the scope of this document.

Overall, these hearings are again one of the most important places for a foster parent to receive information and provide feedback to the judge about how the children in their care are doing.

104 TOTAL HEARINGS REPORTED







I was given one sentence to describe why they were in care. Without knowing the children's past it was impossible to know what triggers might set them off, what therapies might be most helpful, what language to use or avoid. Also, I wasn't able to alleviate their confusion about why they were in care, leaving the oldest in particular, with a feeling of chaos and a need to constantly question everyone's motivations for their choices regarding him being in care.

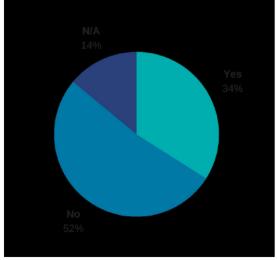


CAREGIVER REPORTS TO THE COURT

Judges or commissioners are responsible for making many of the big decisions for kids in out-of-home care and they rely on various sources of input in order to make the best decision. From the caregiver, they receive that input through a document called the Caregiver Report to the Court⁵. This document covers a wide variety of information about the child's well-being, is completed by the caregiver, and delivered to the court either directly or through the social worker.

This document is one of the few places where a caregiver gets to provide input into the future of the children in their care.

WE ASKED "DID YOU SUBMIT A CAREGIVER REPORT?":





"If you submitted a caregiver report, was it received?"

48% Yes | 51% Unsure

What does that mean that the caregiver is unsure if the report was received?

In most counties, foster parents submit their caregiver reports to their social worker, who is then responsible for submitting it to the court. Which means that if the foster parent does not receive an email confirmation, or if the judge doesn't mention it in the hearing, they are unsure about whether it was received.

Why didn't 52% submit?

Most respondents indicated that they either didn't receive enough notice of a hearing (caregiver reports can take hours to prepare) or they didn't understand the process.

Why are reports not applicable in 14% of the hearings?

Some hearing types do not require a caregiver report.





But can't foster parents just check in with their social worker to get that information?

Sure. They can call or email their social workers at any point.

But have you ever been overwhelmed with your job and had to prioritize tasks? Social workers are chronically overwhelmed. So while they may want nothing more than to check in about a case, they often have to prioritize, and unfortunately, administrative tasks are what often get dropped.

of responses listed social worker communication as their biggest challenge



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

50% ATTRITION RISK

NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

LESSON OF MEH

CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: LESSON OF MEH

When collecting satisfaction information, we asked Pool participants to rate a wide variety of experiences on a rating of either 1-5 or 1-10. And overall, all responses were mid-range. We translate mid-range to "meh."



THE LESSON OF MEH



WE ASKED, "PLEASE RATE YOUR SATISFACTION WITH THE **FOLLOWING":**

	Average	Median
OVERALL SATISFACTION * Overall Satisfaction was provided on a scale from 1 - 10. All other ratings are 1-5.	6.02	6
Your involvement in creation of the visitation schedule	2.94	3
Notice of any visitation schedule changes	3.03	3
How the meeting (SPM, FTDM) was scheduled and communicated	2.79	3
The experience in the meeting (SPM, FTDM)	2.89	3
The outcome of the meeting (SPM, FTDM)	2.87	3
Your notification of the hearing schedule	2.97	3
Your experience with the hearing	2.79	3
The outcome of the hearing	2.86	3
How the Health and Safety visit was scheduled and communicated	3.68	3
The experience of the Health and Safety visit	3.65	3

WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

It tells us that more information is needed. We need to ask more questions - and potentially better questions. True, satisfaction may actually be meh, but what concerns us is that the open-text comments we received, as well as what we consistently see across Facebook groups and other mediums, is that foster parents are far from meh. This incongruence tells us that we need to do some further investigation.



TOP 5 WINS

THE LESSON OF MEH

Because we saw this ambiguity in our rating system, we spent a large amount of time reviewing and categorizing comments. When designing our surveys, we were careful to leave multiple open-text opportunities for people to provide open feedback. We took those open text fields and categorized them, which means that we read through all comments, marked down common themes, and then formally worked our way backwards to categorize and quantify those comments.

If you are a Pool member that took the time to tell us a little more about a situation, thank you. Your words are important and we have spent a lot of time with them.

This time paid off in several very helpful insights. For example, below you can see a categorization of what foster parents said were their greatest wins and greatest challenges over the course of five monthly surveys:

Foster child obtaining/receiving needed physical health, mental health, or education services	12%
Foster child improvement in development/hitting new milestones	12%
Communicating and working with SW, GAL, CASA	11%
Case moving forward toward permanence	10%
Successful transition in or out of the foster home	8%
TOP 5 CHALLENGES	
Poor communication with SW	20%
Foster child's behavior and health	17%
Lack of information and answers	10%
Transitioning foster child out of current placement	9%

Delays in case, long periods of waiting

8%



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

> **50% ATTRITION RISK**

NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

LESSON OF MEH

OVERWHELMING CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: OVERWHELMING CHAOS

Foster parents do not expect an easy experience. However, one thing we clearly saw was that some of the inefficiencies of the system add an additional layer of chaos to the foster family's life - and it is that additional layer that is sometimes the breaking point.



KEY LEARNING: CHAOS

Please take a moment to imagine the chaos that some foster families face. They are introduced to a child they have never met and know nothing about. They may or may not be given key information (sometimes because it's just not available) about allergies, food preferences, schedule, school, fears, etc. They are not always told how long the child will stay, if there are visits with biological family, or when there will be a court date for the child. The foster parent then makes it their job to get to know this child and learn everything about them.

All of these areas of chaos are difficult, but what can sometimes push a family over the edge are the daily additions to that chaos. Imagine for a second that you are parenting a baby that does not nap on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays because of visits. Or, imagine that you take the four hours that are scheduled for a visit to run errands or attend an appointment - but that parent doesn't show up, so the visit is cancelled and you need to immediately drop your plans and adjust accordingly.

This is not a debate about the importance of visitation and reunification - we fully support both. But if we are trying to find ways to retain foster homes and stabilize the system, the impact of these areas of chaos cannot be ignored.



Visitation and last-minute scheduling appeared to be a large part of that feeling of chaos.

CHAOS CONTRIBUTORS

32% of total visits **VISIT: MISSED NAPS**

16% of total visits VISIT: NO SHOW

15% of total visits VISIT: DURATION CHANGE

HEALTH & SAFETY: LAST MINUTE SCHEDULING 29 reports

VISIT: TRANSPORTATION OF 3+ HOURS 124 reports

VISIT: TIME IN TRANSPORT LONGER THAN TIME IN VISIT 41 reports



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

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LESSON OF MEH

OVERWHELMING CHAOS

ANGER & HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: ANGER AND HOPELESSNESS

Foster parents do this because they want to help children, but as you've seen in the previous learnings, the experience can be very challenging.

Those challenges can lead to feelings of anger, hopelessness, and despair for these families who are trying to help.



ANGER & HOPELESSNESS

Many foster parents are determined to create change for the better for these children, only to find a complex and difficult to navigate system. Some come to the conclusion that they are part of the dysfunction, they are part of the harm to these children, and become hopeless about whether change can happen.

Additionally, perhaps through the previous pages you have caught on to the fact that foster parents have a plethora of reasons to feel frustrated. And when that frustration combines with a feeling of voicelessness, often the volume can start to rise. This creates a "rant culture" of sorts where Facebook groups and meetings are filled with frustration, anger and tears when sharing fostering experiences.



When asked how they would rate their hopefulness that the system can change, the average response was 6/10.



I have heard so many things about how "they" are looking into this, or might try that, or legislature said this and haven't seen proof of any of it happening or significant improvement in the last 10 years. Instead caseloads just seem to get bigger and things just seem to keep going downhill in an overall sense. I have very little faith in government or the ability to change its processes. So while there is always hope, and I will continue to hold out hope for a better future and a system that does less harm to our kids, it's not as high as it once was.



ANGER & HOPELESSNESS

While we completely understand the frustration (trust us, we've all been there or are currently there), one thing we have noted is that the levels of anger make it harder to know how widespread a problem is. Is the issue affecting a significant portion of foster parents? Or is it a small percentage, but those who are impacted are upset and vocal? When it comes to prioritizing problems and allocating resources, it is important to get a clearer picture of how widespread some problems are.

Additionally, in the future we want to work to better understand how hopelessness is impacting overall behavior, especially interactions. As you can see in the quote below, an organization in Kenya is using a similar idea to improve their governmental systems. What they found was that hopelessness produced corruption. How is this playing out in the foster care system?

Also, we highly recommend taking the 10 minutes to watch the TED talk referenced below. Especially if you think that this Lab idea is cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs. Link available in the reference section.



But when we dug deeper, we didn't find corruption in the classic sense: slimy gangsters lurking in the darkness, waiting to grease the palms of their friends. What we found was an overwhelming sense of helplessness. Our government was sick, because government employees felt helpless. They felt that they were not empowered to drive change. And when people feel stuck and helpless, they stop seeing their role in a bigger system. They start to think the work they do doesn't matter in driving change. And when that happens, things slow down, fall through the cracks and inefficiencies flourish.7

Charity Wayua TED Talk, November 2016



OPPORTUNITIES & CURIOSITIES



But I'm asking you to consider data — all kinds of data — as the beginning of the conversation and not the end. Because data alone will never give us a solution.6

Giorgia Lupi TED Talk, March 2017

So now what do we do with all of this information?

Now we start again. If you remember from the beginning, continuous improvement is a cycle - clarify, try, learn. The data we gathered should produce a list of curiosities and opportunities that then guide the next phase of the cycle.



OPPORTUNITIES & CURIOSITIES

TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

50% ATTRITION RISK

NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

LESSON OF MEH

OVERWHELMING **CHAOS**

ANGER & **HOPELESSNESS** Here is our list of the opportunities and curiosities that came out of this Phase:

- 1. How do we quantify hope? What about chaos? How do we do a better job of measuring these two outcomes so that we can reduce the contributing factors?
- Hopelessness isn't just limited to the foster family, it infuses all 2. parts of this system. How we increase the levels of hope between all parties? How do we help the feelings of partnership and forward-momentum in all conversations?
- 3 Looking at the reasons that foster parents are unlikely to renew their license, how do we further quantify disrespect or retaliation? Not just that we measure the feeling, but how do we capture the incidents that raise this feeling and help to reduce them?
- 4. How can we build trust with those around us in order to collaborate on change?
- How do we take the Lesson of Meh and do a better job of 5. capturing foster family satisfaction? How can we combine tools like sentiment analysis?
- How do we continue to measure health and well-being? 6.
- How do we quantify the impact of foster families not being 7. invited to hearings or meetings?
- 8. What are some of the competing responsibilities that keep social workers from updating foster parents about things like hearings? How do we measure and find solutions?
- 9. How much is permanency delayed by some of these things that aren't working as expected? What is the impact on the family, but also the systemic impact?

We have plenty more questions, but right now, we want you to focus on one - what is your role and responsibility in this? How can you take these learnings and make a difference in your sphere of influence? Remember that you aren't supposed to fix everything, but to clarify, try, and learn. What is one thing you can do this week?



WHAT NOW?

Where do we go from here? Well, great question. As we review our lessons, it seems clear to us that The Lab is an idea worth pursuing. Our tribe is growing and we are all starting to look at the problem in new ways.

Our mission has clarified over the last few months and we are planning to move forward with a focus on pursuing better data and better conversations.

We hope we have demonstrated how insightful data can help to guide conversations about finding solutions. We need to expand both the depth and reach of our Pool, as well as provide them with different methods of submitting data.

And more importantly, we want to help create opportunities for better conversations.



28 out of 32 responses to the question "What was the most satisfying part of participating in The Lab?" said that being heard and participating in change was the best part of the process.

What starts to happen to problems like hopelessness, exhaustion, distrust, and anger when we simply provide an opportunity for people to use their voices? And when those in power have access to a wider selection of data, how will that impact their chances of truly listening and responding?

We want to help develop a foster care culture that is marked by hope, creativity, and change. We are still ironing out the specifics, but for now, let us say that we have greatly appreciated every survey response, question, and conversation. We appreciate you making it through this (long) document and we are hopeful for what is to come.

To keep up with us, follow us on Facebook or sign up for our email list (available on our website). If you have specific questions about anything in the document or would like to talk further, email us at labstaff@fosterinnovationlab.com.

Cheers to change,

Lori Mackenzie Patty Shannon



- 1: DSHS Continuum of Care Report, December 2016
- 2: Washington State Office of the Ombudsman
- 3: The Children's Administration Practices and Procedures Guide
- 4: The Children's Administration Practices and Procedures Guide
- 5: Downloadable Caregiver Report to the Court
- 6: Lupia, Giorgia. (March, 2017). TED Talk: How we can find ourselves in data. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/giorgia-lupi-how-we-can-find-ourselves-in-data/transcript?language=en
- 7: Wayua, Charity. (November, 2016). TED Talk: A few ways to fix a government. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/charity_wayua_a_few_ways_to_fix_an_ailing_government



GLOSSARY

1624- CAFPT

Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 1624 was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate on April 20, 2007. This bill requires regional and statewide quarterly meetings between Children's Administration (CA), foster parents, and the Foster Parent Association of Washington State (FPAWS). CAPTF is the Children's Administration Foster Parent Team, charged with organizing these meetings.

Agile Development

a set of principles for software development under which requirements and solutions evolve through the collaborative effort of self-organizing cross-functional teams.

CASA/GAL

CASA/GAL volunteers are appointed by judges to watch over and advocate for abused and neglected children, to make sure they don't get lost in the overburdened legal and social service system or languish in inappropriate group or foster homes. Volunteers stay with each case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. For many abused children, their

CASA/GAL volunteer will be the one constant adult presence in their lives.

Caregiver

Foster parent, relative or fictive kin caring for a foster child.

Caregiver Report to the Court

A form to be filled out by the caregiver regarding a foster child in their care. This form is the main opportunity for a caregiver to share any information about the child in their care and their needs to

the court.

^{*} Note that cach glossary term is a link where you can find more information - if they links aren't working, visit our website.



Children's Administration Public child welfare agency for the state of Washington. Works with children and families to identify their needs and develop a plan for services that support families and assure the safety and well-being of children. These services are designed to reduce the risk of abuse, find safe alternatives to out-of-home placement and assure safety and permanency for children in out-of-home care.

Hackathon

Event in which computer programmers and others involved in software development, including subject matter experts collaborate intensively on projects.

Continuous Improvement An ongoing effort to improve products, services, or processes. These efforts can seek "incremental" improvement over time or "breakthrough" improvement all at once

Department of Children, Youth and Families

Governor Inslee tasked a Commission with creating a blueprint for a new agency to have a cabinet-level department that will align state policies across agencies and have accountability for better using the state's resources to improve the lives of children and families. This new agency will ensure there is a focus on the well-being of children and reduce barriers to improving services so that better outcomes can be achieved. This bill has passed the House and currently is with the Senate.

Design Thinking

A methodology used by designers to solve complex problems, and find desirable solutions for clients. Design Thinking draws upon logic, imagination, intuition, and systemic reasoning, to explore possibilities of what could be-and to create desired outcomes that benefit the end user (the customer)

Fictive Kin

Individuals not related by blood or marriage but have a significant relationship with an individual that takes on the characteristics of a family relationship.

Foster Parent Pool

Our faithful group of foster parents who indicated they were willing to help and have been taking weekly and monthly surveys from the start of our experiment.

Health and Safety Visits

Face-to-face visits with children who have an open case with CA and regular visits with out-of-home caregivers and all known parents provides opportunity for ongoing assessments of the health, safety, and well-being of children. Regular visits with out-of-home caregivers increase opportunities to monitor child safety, can promote permanency, and provides the worker with information they can share with the parent

Permanency

Resolution to child's temporary legal status (being placed in out-of-home or foster care). The department has timelines that it is supposed to adhere to.

Placement Desk

Specially trained individuals with DSHS who place foster children needing homes with the appropriate placement.

Private Agency

Some foster parents choose to obtain their foster parent license through a private agency (many for a fee). Private agencies can provide additional staff, support and resources for a foster family that many times the state cannot.



GLOSSARY

RCW

Revised Code of Washington- the compilation of all permanent laws now in force. It is a collection of Session Laws (enacted by the Legislature, and signed by the Governor, or enacted via the initiative process), arranged by topic, with amendments added and repealed laws removed.

Response Bias

Also called survey bias is the tendency of a person to answer questions on a survey untruthfully or misleadingly. For example, they may feel pressure to give answers that are socially acceptable..

State Licensed

Foster families can become licensed through the state directly. This route does not cost any money and when they choose this route, there is very limited outside help available if they have difficulty understanding the system. Most areas have local support groups run through a non profit organization that can provide some assistance.

Visitation

Court ordered contact between children and biological parents (also for foster children and siblings who are not placed in the same home). To maintain family connections and bonds.

WAC

Washington Administrative Code- Regulations of executive branch agencies are issued by authority of statutes. Like legislation and the Constitution, regulations are a source of primary law in Washington State. The WAC codifies the regulations and arranges them by subject or agency.

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: <u>Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA)</u>
Date: 6/13/2017 6:28:27 PM

Subject: RE: The Foster Innovation Lab

Many thanks....will share with Joel. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA)
Sent: Tuesday, June 13, 2017 11:24 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: The Foster Innovation Lab

This is what the foster innovation lab is

From: Waterhouse, Meri (DSHS/CA) Sent: Monday, June 12, 2017 2:13 PM

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA) < strusj@dshs.wa.gov ceigeBL@dshs.wa.gov strusj@dshs.wa.gov

Subject: RE: The Foster Innovation Lab

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- 1. How do we quantify hope? What about chaos? How do we do a better job of measuring these two outcomes so that we can reduce the contributing factors?
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- 3. Looking at the reasons that foster parents are unlikely to renew their license, how do we further quantify disrespect or retaliation? Not just that we measure the feeling, but how do we capture the incidents that raise Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002356

this feeling and help to reduce them?

- 4. How can we build trust with those around us in order to collaborate on change?
- 5. How do we take the Lesson of Meh and do a better job of capturing foster family satisfaction? How can we combine tools like sentiment analysis?
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Goal: to retain foster homes and help stabilize the system. Plan: move forward with a focus on pursuing better data and better conversations.

Meri Waterhouse, Program Manager

Foster Care Recruitment & Retention
Children's Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
1115 Washington St., S.E.
PO Box 45710
Olympia, WA 98504-5710
360-902-8035 – phone
waterml@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

Consider becoming a foster parent – kids from your community who have been abused and neglected need your help. Will it be easy? Not every day. . . Will it be worth it? Absolutely! www.dshs.wa.gov/fosterparents

From: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA) Sent: Monday, June 12, 2017 1:04 PM

To: Waterhouse, Meri (DSHS/CA) < waterml@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: The Foster Innovation Lab

You ever heard of these folks?

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Monday, June 12, 2017 8:38 AM

Subject: FW: The Foster Innovation Lab

Hi..

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Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration <u>lambecm@dshs.wa.gov</u> 360-902-7982 From: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2017 10:13 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >

Cc: Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA) < LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Fwd: The Foster Innovation Lab

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Debbie forwarded this to us. I've not heard of this group as there are many entities out there that are doing different things "for foster care".

Perhaps you've heard about them? I don't intend on following up with them; nor will I ask Debbie to do anything with the group.

Just letting you know.

Joel Odimba, PhD, ACSW / Regional Administrator

Children's Administration, Region 3

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

(Tacoma) 253-983-6258

(Olympia) 360-725-6280/joel.odimba@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: "Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA)" < LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: FW: The Foster Innovation Lab

Date: 07 June 2017 15:43

To: "Devoy, Peggy (DSHS/CA)" < DevoyPR@dshs.wa.gov >, "Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)"

<ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>
Anyone heard of this group?

From: Patty FL [mailto:patty@fosterinnovationlab.com]

Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2017 10:42 AM

To: Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA) < LynnDeb@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: The Foster Innovation Lab

Hi Debbie,

Becca Curzon sent me your address that she collected at the Foster Parent and Area Administrator Forum. Thank you!

From a deep desire for change, The Foster Innovation Lab was formed by 4 foster and adoptive moms. We have spent the last 10 months working together to build a tribe of like-minded people who not only desire change but are willing to step up and participate. We are delighted that you have signed up and are requesting additional information about our work. I am attaching a copy of the report we generated from 6 months of data collected in both weekly and monthly surveys from a dedicated group of foster parents.

Your address will also be added to our mailing list so you will get consistent updates on our progress. We would love to hear any feedback you might have as we spend time this summer developing our Phase II. Please take a moment to check out our website and join our FaceBook page.

I would love to hear from you!

Patty and the rest of the team at The Lab

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)
Date: 6/13/2017 6:29:16 PM

Subject: FW: The Foster Innovation Lab

Attachments: Foster Innovation Lab - Phase One Report.pdf

Hi....

See string below. No formal relationship or expectation to engage. C.

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love to hear any feedback you might have as we spend time this summer developing our Phase II. Please take a moment to check out our website and join our FaceBook page.
I would love to hear from you!
Patty and the rest of the team at The Lab



thefosterinnovationlab.com



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Foster Innovation Lab exists to inspire positive change within foster care by creating a culture of innovation, creativity, and shared learning.

We do this by clarifying challenges, facilitating collaboration, and promoting better conversations.

This document provides an overview of our six-month alpha phase, affectionately called Phase One. We have used a show-and-tell approach to demonstrate how business principles, such as continuous improvement, can have an impact on the current challenges facing the Washington state foster care system.

Over the past six months we have collected piles of data, clarified problems, tested solutions - all with the goal of sparking a culture that embraces creativity and collaborative learning. This report reviews the seven Key Learnings that have come out of Phase One.

- **Learning 1**: We started The Lab to see if we could grow a tribe of people interested in solving problems differently. That tribe is growing.
- **Learning 2**: Progress with the foster care community is slowed by exhaustion, distrust, and large gaps in existing communication systems.
- **Learning 3**: Our data shows that over 50% of families are either undecided or unlikely to renew their foster care license.
- **Learning 4**: Important communication points, such as hearings and <u>Health and Safety visits</u>, aren't working as might be expected.
- **Learning 5:** Our satisfaction ratings all came back in the midrange, which likely reflects that we weren't asking the right questions.
- **Learning 6**: Foster parents expect this experience to be hard, but sometimes it is the unexpected <u>visitation</u> and scheduling chaos that pushes families over the edge.
- **Learning 7**: The anger and hopelessness that pervade the system are understandable, but also create an obstacle for driving change and are an important area to focus efforts.

These learnings are not surprising, nor are they the end of the story. These are themes that have impacted the foster care system for decades. By looking at them in a new way - with data that digs beneath the surface and an approach that focuses on small, continuous changes - we are hopeful that we can truly begin to drive innovation.



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SPOILER ALERT

If you've been around the foster care system for a while, you are not going to find the information in this report surprising. The same problems have been around for years.

Very few of the known issues have been fully quantified and categorized, which is what we have started to do. You can't fix what you can't measure.

In the following pages, we are going to take a look at some of the most common problems through a different lens. When it comes to actually making a difference in changing this system, the key is to start tackling the small problems one at a time.



OUR STORY

We are four current and former foster moms that feel passionately about helping foster children. We came to a point where fostering alone didn't feel like enough. We watched helplessly as the consequences of a broken system impacted the kids in our care. We wanted to see change so desperately and then wondered if we felt this way, surely there must be others who felt the same. Out of this passion and curiosity, The Lab was born.



Describing the journey to create The Foster Innovation Lab is challenging. If you've found yourself perplexed by what we're doing, you aren't alone. We've had those moments ourselves.

Over the course of many online hangouts after our kids went to bed (we have 9 children between us), we clarified our vision and forged ahead. The Foster Innovation Lab began out of Shannon's experiences as a foster mom, her time on the 1624 board, a Hackathon at the White House, and her professional consulting experience - all of which shaped her perspective about how systematic change can take place. Those experiences paired well with Lori's business and writing skills, Patty's background in nonprofit finance, and my experience in education, curriculum development, and nonprofit leadership. Together, we are a dynamic team.

This combination of parenting and professional experiences led to a willingness to stand in the uncomfortable tension of not completely understanding, but recognizing a deep need for a shift in the experience of out-of-home caregivers. We had to move beyond simply sharing our individual stories and seeing the brokenness; we had to enter in and engage in the improvement process.

Over the last nine months, a lot has changed. We've become an official nonprofit organization, consulted with state representatives, and built a pool of foster parents who are willing to provide survey after survey. In many ways, our data and experiences over the last 9 months have reinforced what we thought we knew, but much has challenged our ideas and led us to ask additional questions. We hope it does the same for you.

- Mackenzie

THREE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT US:

INDEPENDENT:

We are unfunded and independent of Children's Administration or any other organization. This was a deliberate decision, and although we have and will continue collaborating with other organizations, the flexibility of going in any direction that our research and data might lead was important to us.

WILLING TO FAIL:

Our attitude throughout Phase One has been "let's give it a shot." We have given it our best and are looking forward to sharing both the successes and failures with everyone, because it is the failures that are often the most helpful.

SERIOUS ABOUT BEING INFORMAL:

Our tone in this document (and everything we do) is more informal than you might expect. We believe that collaborative, creative conversations are the key to change. And when it comes to starting conversations, we far prefer to be informal and friendly.



THE CURRENT SITUATION

The problems within foster care are messy and overwhelming. Solving them is about as straightforward as herding squirrels.

With a squirt gun. In a thunderstorm.

After spending a considerable amount of time trying to help solve those problems through official channels, we started The Lab to try something different. We wondered what would happen if we created a way to demonstrate incremental, measured improvement methods that are common within private industry, but relatively unknown within foster care.

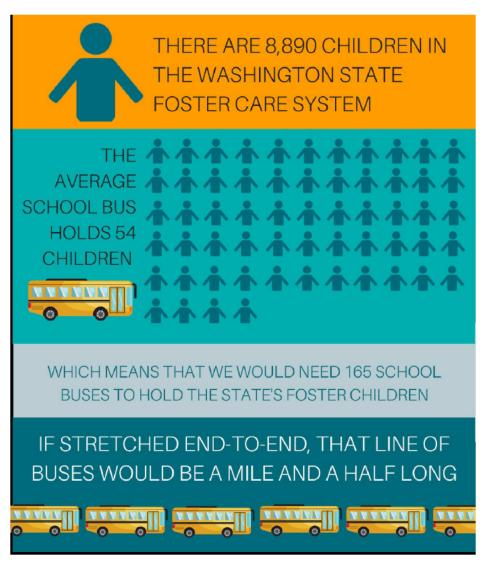
We chose these methods because they are slow, deliberate, and easily adjusted. There is no magic bullet for foster care. Instead, we need to work together to creatively and collaboratively tackle the current challenges.

Like any faithful believers in agility, our goals have shifted throughout this process. During our initial six-month alpha phase, we have watched, listened, and wondered.

And like many of you, we have also questioned whether the system can really change. We've sometimes felt overwhelmed and hopeless in our efforts, but we've continued to push forward because, here's the thing:

There are currently 8,890¹ kids in foster care in Washington state.

So sure. We are tired and stressed, but we have a choice about whether we remain connected to this system. These 8,890 kids do not. They are stuck and they deserve better.





THE CURRENT SITUATION

Washington State has a foster care crisis. There are approximately 5,144² licensed foster homes in Washington state. And while the math might seem to work at first glance (assuming that each home could take about 2 kids), the reality is that the numbers don't work. Many of those homes are full, or not taking additional children, or not qualified to take some of the highest-need placements. The result is that placement desks are struggling to find homes for children, and unfortunately, that means that some of our state's most vulnerable children are spending nights in DSHS offices, hotels, or with foster parents who agree to take them for one night only.

This further traumatizes that child and is stretching the system's resources to the max.



The number of nights kids that stayed in hotels ncreased more than seven-fold over the last ear. In the past 12 months there were 883 lacement exceptions involving 221 children, compared to just 120 exceptions involving 72 kids in the previous year, according to the state Office of Family and Children's Ombuds, which handles complaints about the foster care system. Nearly all occurred in Region 2 last year, with 57 percent in King County. Almost all were hotel stays, but in a few cases kids also stayed in DSHS offices.

In addition to the cost of the hotel room, the state must pay two social workers, and sometimes a security guard, who stay awake all night supervising the children."

Allegra Abramo & Susanna Ray https://kcts9.org/programs/system-in-crisis/foster-car e-crisis

Foster children are spending the night in hotels and bouncing from home to home.

They deserve better. A child's experiences in foster care affect the rest of their lives, the lives of their future children, and generations to come.

This affects all of us, whether we are connected to foster care or not.

Let's talk about what can be done.



THE CURRENT SITUATION

THERE IS NO MAGIC BULLET FOR **FIXING FOSTER CARE**

If created, the transition to the new Department of Children, Youth, and

Families is a great step. However, we also need to address the current culture of fear within the system, in which fear overrides creativity and there is far more contention than collaboration. Fixing the cultural challenges will be a slow, steady process.

But it is not impossible by any means.

We built The Lab to demonstrate some of the business principles that are used by leading companies. Each of these concepts can directly and successfully start to unravel the problems facing the system.

We have built The Lab as an experiment in show-and-tell. Sure, we can talk about how these methods could be helpful, but isn't it always better to demonstrate?

KEY CONCEPTS

Continuous Improvement:

Originally developed to improve manufacturing, continuous improvement is focused on making small, iterative changes in order to improve overall functioning.

Agile Development:

Likewise, agile development is also focused on small, iterative changes.

Design Thinking:

A method of simplifying and solving complex problems by relying on creative, visual methods.

Collaborative Learning:

Shared knowledge is the most powerful knowledge. Collaborative learning means that we work to combine the learnings of many in order to move us all forward.

OUR PROCESS HAS FOLLOWED THREE STEPS:

CLARIFY THE PROBLEM

EXPERIMENT WITH SOLUTIONS **LEARN AND** SHARE

REPEAT

CLARIFY THE PROBLEM

We did this in two ways:

- 1. First, we built a pool of foster parents who completed surveys over the course of six months in order to build a foundation of data to drive our efforts.
- 2. Second, we started by focusing in on three specific user stories. A user story is simply a specific and clear problem that needs to be solved.

USER STORIES			
Visitation Scheduling	Delivery of Caregiver Reports	Access to Childcare	
As a foster parent, I want to be adequately notified of changes to the visitation plan, so that I can plan my family's schedule accordingly.	As a foster parent, I want to receive confirmation that my caregiver report to the court was received by the judge/commissioner, so that I know my voice was heard.	As a foster parent, I need to be able to find childcare that accepts state payment, so that I can continue to foster and keep my job.	

2

EXPERIMENT WITH SOLUTIONS

As mentioned, The Lab is an experiment in and of itself. We were testing to see what would happen if we tried a show-and-tell method. Additionally, we ran experiments specifically to see if we could impact the user stories. For a full description of each experiment, please visit our website. We will share about how those experiments went in our second Key Learning.

3

LEARN AND SHARE

And finally, the entire point is to learn and share and then begin the cycle again. Our hope is to help build a tribe of people who are willing to risk, quick to embrace the learnings that come from failure, and committed to building a community of collaborative learning.

We have walked out of Phase One with seven Key Learnings. As you will see, these Learnings provide insight, but they also create questions. Because good data should build better questions - and the cycle of clarifying, experimenting, and learning can start again.



TRIBE IS GROWING

GAPS

EXPECTED

OVERWHELMING CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: OUR TRIBE IS GROWING

One of our big questions in Phase 1 was simply, "If we provide an example of using continuous improvement within the foster care system, will anyone find it interesting?"

From what we can tell, the answer is yes. We are slowly building a tribe that is engaged and interested.



OUR TRIBE IS GROWING

A GROWING CURIOSITY

Our core goal in Phase One was not huge numbers, but instead we wanted to create pockets of curiosity. We wanted a core group of people who were intrigued and interested in learning more. From that standpoint, we are very please with the numbers below, which show us that a our tribe is growing and engaged.

If you are one of those subscribers or followers, thank you, we're glad you're here. If you don't subscribe, head on over to our website and jump on the bandwagon. All the cool kids are doing it.

ENGAGEMENT METRICS			
637	308	43.4%	239
website visitors*	email subscribers	average email open rate**	Facebook followers

^{*}Visitor total begins on December 1st in order to exclude traffic from Pool recruiting.

responses

THREE CHEERS FOR THE POOL

Furthermore, our amazing pool of foster parents was committed and consistent about providing both weekly and monthly surveys.

92 poo	ol memb	ers subm	nitted:
11	635	5	267
weekly	weekly	monthly	monthly
surveys	survey	surveys	survey

responses

^{**} Industry average is 20.07%. Also, email open rate excludes Pool emails in order to avoid skewing the data.



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST, AND COMMUNICATION GAPS

A combination of exhaustion and distrust, as well as gaps in existing communication channels hindered progress - and will be a challenge in future efforts.



EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST, COMMUNICATION

EXHAUSTION

Many people within the foster care system are completely exhausted. Shocking, right? We know, this is a fairly obvious statement, but when considering solutions, it's important to lay out all of the contributing factors, even the obvious ones. Throughout Phase One we continuously saw that even when people wanted to get involved to help drive change, feelings of being exhausted and emotionally overwhelmed would sometimes get in the way.

DISTRUST

Furthermore, mixed with that exhaustion is a deep sense of distrust. Especially because we were new and unknown, we saw a lot of early interest, but hesitation to fully commit. We heard messages of distrust in several ways:

- Who are you and are you connected to Children's Administration? Unfortunately, there is a lot of fear within foster care, which is a large part of why we were careful with our identities. That fear went both ways, as early audiences were suspicious of our intentions and whether we were connected to CA.
- How do I know that this is going to make a difference? Perhaps even more prevalent was a distrust of whether any time or energy invested in The Lab would actually result in change. The problems within the system have been the same for decades, and understandably there is a hesitance to spend time or energy trying to make a difference.

COMMUNICATION

Communication within foster care is challenging, to say the least. There is no one way to communicate with foster parents. Some are licensed through the state; some are licensed through private agencies and they might receive information differently. Some information is disseminated through Facebook groups, some through email lists, some through foster parent support groups, and some directly through social worker interactions.

Additionally, sometimes the answers to the same question vary greatly based on who you ask. Different regions, counties, supervisors, and social workers at times provide different answers to the same question. For example, when we were fine-tuning our experiments, we spent a lot of time confirming policy around things like submitting a caregiver report. We would receive different answers based on who we asked, what county they were in, and what role they had.

Again, none of these three points is surprising, but when we sat down for our retrospective conversations, these themes came up again and again, which makes them important to note and consider when planning future efforts.



EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST, COMMUNICATION

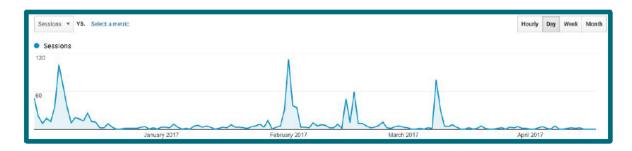
IMPACT

These dynamics had some important impacts on Phase One and will be a key consideration as we plan Phase Two. Two core areas of impact:

Pool Participants: One of the first places we noticed the impact was in building our foster parent pool. We had almost 200 foster parents originally raise their hands to join the pool. However, in order to guarantee case confidentiality and data quality, we asked all participants to watch a 15-minute training video prior to participating. Only 92 caregivers completed that training.

Volunteers: We had quite a few volunteers raise their hands and offer to help with everything from experiments to analysis, but unfortunately, the majority were unable to follow through as planned. (If you are one of them, don't worry, we completely understand. No blame here, just unpacking the process.)

Because of this, we have made several adjustments throughout the process based on our internal bandwidth. One of those things, as you likely noticed if you are a subscriber, is that we almost completely stopped sharing content at two points. As you can see below in our web traffic, visits to our site are directly tied to the content we are pushing out (as expected). In both January and April we produced very little content as we worked to finalize both experiment design and analysis, respectively.



We saw a similar dynamic play out in our experiments. There was a spike of traffic upon the announcement of the experiments, as well as smaller spikes each time we pushed a reminder. Unfortunately, that traffic would level out within hours.

These traffic flows were telling us that we needed to approach this differently. We were not getting enough traffic to get statistically-relevant data without making constant noise. Not only did we not have enough bandwidth to constantly push content, but we definitely did not want to be another source of obnoxious noise. So we eventually decided to pause experiments and take this as a learning.



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

50% ATTRITION RISK

EXPECTED

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: 50% ATTRITION RISK

The number of foster homes is already alarmingly low, and if things go really poorly, we could be looking at an attrition rate of up to 50%.

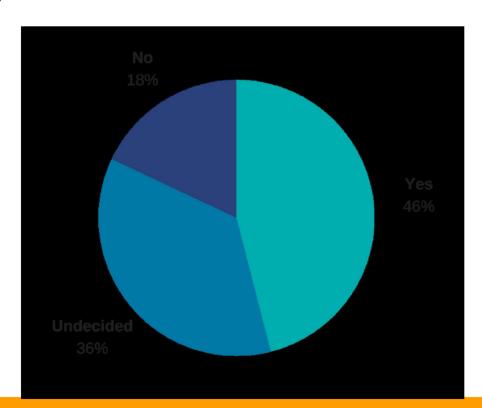


RISK OF 50% ATTRITION

If a large part of the current crisis is that there are not currently enough homes for the kids that need them, an important part of stabilizing the system is to increase the number of licensed homes. While recruiting new homes is always important, it is more important to retain the existing homes.

Let's take a look at what we found about whether foster parents intend to stay, as well as the reasons behind their choices.

WE ASKED, "ARE YOU PLANNING TO RENEW YOUR LICENSE?":





54% answered Unlikely, Highly Unlikely, or Undecided



Crises were happening so fast and we were not able to get services and things addressed fast enough. The foster child, our children, our community, and our marriage were greatly affected and it could have potentially all been prevented if we knew more of her back story.



RISK OF 50% ATTRITION

TOP FIVE REASONS:

LIKELY TO RENEW	
Helping the kids	37%
Good caseworkers	20%
High need for caregivers	17%
Making a difference	10%
Long-term placement	10%
UNDECIDED	
Permanency takes too long	27%
Lack of support	27%
Lied to by the state	13%
Lack of information about the kids	13%
Frustration with the system	7%
UNLIKELY TO RENEW	
Disrespect	22%
Retaliation	22%
Visitation Issues	17%
Best interest of the bio parents over best interest of the child	13%
Lack of communication	9%

^{*} These categories arose out of our open text analysis, which we will explain further in Learning 5.



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

50% ATTRITION RISK

NOT WORKING AS **EXPECTED**

CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

Foster parents have several key points of contact with their social workers, judges, and other important team members. As you can imagine, it is critically important that these points of contact are functioning properly, since they are the main way that information about both the child's well-being and case updates are transferred. However, our data shows that there may be some very important gaps.



HEALTH AND SAFETY VISITS:

For those unfamiliar with foster care, Children's Administration defines Health and Safety visits as face-to-face visits with children who have an open case with Children's Administration and regular visits with out-of-home caregivers and all known parents provides opportunity for ongoing assessments of the health, safety, and well-being of children. Regular visits with out-of-home caregivers increase opportunities to monitor child safety, can promote permanency, and provides the worker with information they can share with the parent. Regular visits with parents can provide the parent with reassuring information about how his/her child is doing in placement, monitors progress with services and case goals, shorten length-of-stay and achieve permanency more quickly.³



32

comments indicating a positive experience

52

comments indicating that the visit was done by a courtesy worker, at an alternate location, or that the social worker didn't have information available



The only chance I have for updates on the progress of the case for the child in our home is during the Health and Safety visits. These visits aren't just about the child and the appropriateness of our home, but a time to exchange information. Unfortunately, in our case my social worker has only come to our home once in 16 months. Twelve of the sixteen visits have happened at our foster daughter's daycare when I have not been notified and therefore not present. Three of them took place in a DSHS lobby so she could make sure the child was safe and healthy, but did not provide an opportunity for me to talk about her progress or any concerns. This has left me without information and feeling frustrated as the case has dragged on.

To be clear, I am not criticizing my social worker. She has a caseload with more than double the acceptable number of cases and has to do at least 8 health and safety visits in one day in order to accomplish all that her job requires. What I am saying is that I don't feel communicated with. I don't know what's going on in our foster daughter's case, and I therefore don't know how to best support and advocate for her.



An 80% completion rate is concerning, but what caught our attention is those 52 comments that mention an alternate location, courtesy worker, or that the social worker did not have information about the case available.



Why are we concerned about this detail? Shouldn't we just focus on getting 80% closer to 100%?

No, and allow us to digress for a moment to explain. Foster parents are not considered "legal party to the case." Which means that from a legal standpoint, they do not have the same standing as biological parents, social workers, or <u>CASA/GALs</u>.

The result of this standing is that foster parents are outside of the communication process. They receive very little background about the child they are caring for and are only notified about things like hearings or shared planning meetings when their social worker notifies them.

To put it another way, the people who have the most responsibility for providing direct care for the kids often have the least amount of information and are the last to know about important meetings or hearings. One of the key options they have for getting updates is at Health and Safety visits, so if that visit is held elsewhere or by a social worker unfamiliar with the case, the visit might happen, but that foster parent is not receiving information.

Not only is it important that the well-being of the child is being confirmed at these visits, but the conversation between social worker and foster parent is essential to ongoing retention. In the 32 comments that mentioned the Health and Safety visit was a pleasant experience, it was clear that the experience made the foster parents feel valued and respected.



Whether this data is an accurate representation of the statewide Health & Safety experience remains to be determined.

Phase 1 of The Lab was an alpha (or a pilot, depending on which word tickles your fancy). Our sample size is relatively small and skews to the western side of the state.

However, it is more insight than existed previously and definitely enough to be considered directional. Directional data is like a strange smell in your refrigerator. It tells us that there is potentially something important happening and more investigation needs to happen.

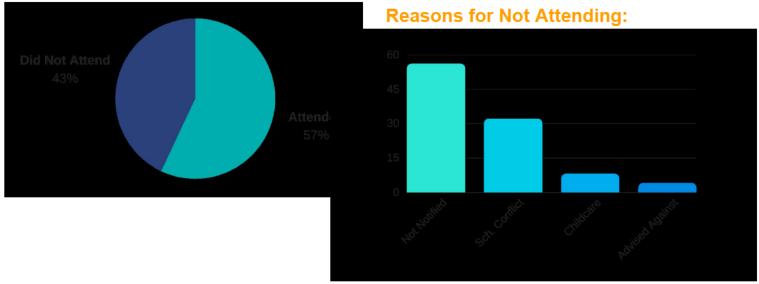


SHARED PLANNING MEETINGS

Children's Administration uses a Shared Planning model to work with families in addressing a variety of needs across the life of a case. The Shared Planning model includes families, youth, relatives, fictive kin, natural supports and others who can assist in the development of a plan that prioritizes child safety and meets the support and service needs of parents, children and caregivers. An inclusive model provides an opportunity for information to be shared, case plans to be developed and decisions made that will support the safety, permanency, and well-being of children.4

* Similarly, Family Team Decision Making meetings bring all parties together to discuss movement of children. For the sake of clarity, both types of meetings have been grouped in our data and explanations.

60 TOTAL MEETINGS REPORTED





It is frustrating when we are the ones who spend the most time and energy with the foster children but are not included, and often not involved at all, in big decisions regarding their future.

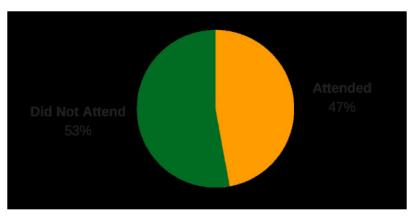


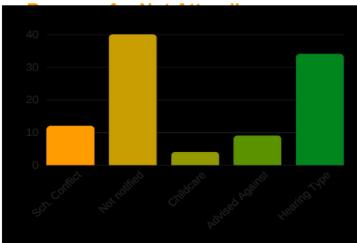
HEARINGS

There are several types of hearings for children in out-of-home care. Some happen on a regular rotation, generally every six months. Some are scheduled last-minute, such as when an emergency occurs or a party petitions the judge regarding something like travel. We won't go into extensive detail about each, since that is outside of the scope of this document.

Overall, these hearings are again one of the most important places for a foster parent to receive information and provide feedback to the judge about how the children in their care are doing.

104 TOTAL HEARINGS REPORTED







I was given one sentence to describe why they were in care. Without knowing the children's past it was impossible to know what triggers might set them off, what therapies might be most helpful, what language to use or avoid. Also, I wasn't able to alleviate their confusion about why they were in care, leaving the oldest in particular, with a feeling of chaos and a need to constantly question everyone's motivations for their choices regarding him being in care.

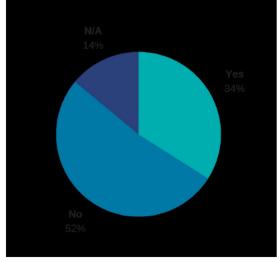


CAREGIVER REPORTS TO THE COURT

Judges or commissioners are responsible for making many of the big decisions for kids in out-of-home care and they rely on various sources of input in order to make the best decision. From the caregiver, they receive that input through a document called the Caregiver Report to the Court⁵. This document covers a wide variety of information about the child's well-being, is completed by the caregiver, and delivered to the court either directly or through the social worker.

This document is one of the few places where a caregiver gets to provide input into the future of the children in their care.

WE ASKED "DID YOU SUBMIT A CAREGIVER REPORT?":





What does that mean that the caregiver is unsure if the report was received?

In most counties, foster parents submit their caregiver reports to their social worker, who is then responsible for submitting it to the court. Which means that if the foster parent does not receive an email confirmation, or if the judge doesn't mention it in the hearing, they are unsure about whether it was received.

Why didn't 52% submit?

Most respondents indicated that they either didn't receive enough notice of a hearing (caregiver reports can take hours to prepare) or they didn't understand the process.

Why are reports not applicable in 14% of the hearings?

Some hearing types do not require a caregiver report.





But can't foster parents just check in with their social worker to get that information?

Sure. They can call or email their social workers at any point.

But have you ever been overwhelmed with your job and had to prioritize tasks? Social workers are chronically overwhelmed. So while they may want nothing more than to check in about a case, they often have to prioritize, and unfortunately, administrative tasks are what often get dropped.

of responses listed social worker communication as their biggest challenge



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

> **50% ATTRITION RISK**

NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

LESSON OF MEH

CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: LESSON OF MEH

When collecting satisfaction information, we asked Pool participants to rate a wide variety of experiences on a rating of either 1-5 or 1-10. And overall, all responses were mid-range. We translate mid-range to "meh."



THE LESSON OF MEH



WE ASKED, "PLEASE RATE YOUR SATISFACTION WITH THE **FOLLOWING":**

	Average	Median
OVERALL SATISFACTION * Overall Satisfaction was provided on a scale from 1 - 10. All other ratings are 1-5.	6.02	6
Your involvement in creation of the visitation schedule	2.94	3
Notice of any visitation schedule changes	3.03	3
How the meeting (SPM, FTDM) was scheduled and communicated	2.79	3
The experience in the meeting (SPM, FTDM)	2.89	3
The outcome of the meeting (SPM, FTDM)	2.87	3
Your notification of the hearing schedule	2.97	3
Your experience with the hearing	2.79	3
The outcome of the hearing	2.86	3
How the Health and Safety visit was scheduled and communicated	3.68	3
The experience of the Health and Safety visit	3.65	3

WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

It tells us that more information is needed. We need to ask more questions - and potentially better questions. True, satisfaction may actually be meh, but what concerns us is that the open-text comments we received, as well as what we consistently see across Facebook groups and other mediums, is that foster parents are far from meh. This incongruence tells us that we need to do some further investigation.



TOP 5 WINS

THE LESSON OF MEH

Because we saw this ambiguity in our rating system, we spent a large amount of time reviewing and categorizing comments. When designing our surveys, we were careful to leave multiple open-text opportunities for people to provide open feedback. We took those open text fields and categorized them, which means that we read through all comments, marked down common themes, and then formally worked our way backwards to categorize and quantify those comments.

If you are a Pool member that took the time to tell us a little more about a situation, thank you. Your words are important and we have spent a lot of time with them.

This time paid off in several very helpful insights. For example, below you can see a categorization of what foster parents said were their greatest wins and greatest challenges over the course of five monthly surveys:

Foster child obtaining/receiving needed physical health, mental health, or education services	12%
Foster child improvement in development/hitting new milestones	12%
Communicating and working with SW, GAL, CASA	11%
Case moving forward toward permanence	10%
Successful transition in or out of the foster home	8%
TOP 5 CHALLENGES	
Poor communication with SW	20%
Foster child's behavior and health	17%
Lack of information and answers	10%
Transitioning foster child out of current placement	9%

Delays in case, long periods of waiting

8%



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

50% ATTRITION RISK

NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

LESSON OF MEH

OVERWHELMING CHAOS

HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: OVERWHELMING CHAOS

Foster parents do not expect an easy experience. However, one thing we clearly saw was that some of the inefficiencies of the system add an additional layer of chaos to the foster family's life - and it is that additional layer that is sometimes the breaking point.



KEY LEARNING: CHAOS

Please take a moment to imagine the chaos that some foster families face. They are introduced to a child they have never met and know nothing about. They may or may not be given key information (sometimes because it's just not available) about allergies, food preferences, schedule, school, fears, etc. They are not always told how long the child will stay, if there are visits with biological family, or when there will be a court date for the child. The foster parent then makes it their job to get to know this child and learn everything about them.

All of these areas of chaos are difficult, but what can sometimes push a family over the edge are the daily additions to that chaos. Imagine for a second that you are parenting a baby that does not nap on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays because of visits. Or, imagine that you take the four hours that are scheduled for a visit to run errands or attend an appointment - but that parent doesn't show up, so the visit is cancelled and you need to immediately drop your plans and adjust accordingly.

This is not a debate about the importance of visitation and reunification - we fully support both. But if we are trying to find ways to retain foster homes and stabilize the system, the impact of these areas of chaos cannot be ignored.



Visitation and last-minute scheduling appeared to be a large part of that feeling of chaos.

CHAOS CONTRIBUTORS

32% of total visits VISIT: MISSED NAPS

16% of total visits VISIT: NO SHOW

15% of total visits VISIT: DURATION CHANGE

HEALTH & SAFETY: LAST MINUTE SCHEDULING 29 reports

VISIT: TRANSPORTATION OF 3+ HOURS 124 reports

VISIT: TIME IN TRANSPORT LONGER THAN TIME IN VISIT 41 reports



TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

> **50% ATTRITION RISK**

NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

LESSON OF MEH

OVERWHELMING CHAOS

ANGER & HOPELESSNESS

KEY LEARNING: ANGER AND HOPELESSNESS

Foster parents do this because they want to help children, but as you've seen in the previous learnings, the experience can be very challenging.

Those challenges can lead to feelings of anger, hopelessness, and despair for these families who are trying to help.



ANGER & HOPELESSNESS

Many foster parents are determined to create change for the better for these children, only to find a complex and difficult to navigate system. Some come to the conclusion that they are part of the dysfunction, they are part of the harm to these children, and become hopeless about whether change can happen.

Additionally, perhaps through the previous pages you have caught on to the fact that foster parents have a plethora of reasons to feel frustrated. And when that frustration combines with a feeling of voicelessness, often the volume can start to rise. This creates a "rant culture" of sorts where Facebook groups and meetings are filled with frustration, anger and tears when sharing fostering experiences.



When asked how they would rate their hopefulness that the system can change, the average response was 6/10.



I have heard so many things about how "they" are looking into this, or might try that, or legislature said this and haven't seen proof of any of it happening or significant improvement in the last 10 years. Instead caseloads just seem to get bigger and things just seem to keep going downhill in an overall sense. I have very little faith in government or the ability to change its processes. So while there is always hope, and I will continue to hold out hope for a better future and a system that does less harm to our kids, it's not as high as it once was.



ANGER & HOPELESSNESS

While we completely understand the frustration (trust us, we've all been there or are currently there), one thing we have noted is that the levels of anger make it harder to know how widespread a problem is. Is the issue affecting a significant portion of foster parents? Or is it a small percentage, but those who are impacted are upset and vocal? When it comes to prioritizing problems and allocating resources, it is important to get a clearer picture of how widespread some problems are.

Additionally, in the future we want to work to better understand how hopelessness is impacting overall behavior, especially interactions. As you can see in the quote below, an organization in Kenya is using a similar idea to improve their governmental systems. What they found was that hopelessness produced corruption. How is this playing out in the foster care system?

Also, we highly recommend taking the 10 minutes to watch the TED talk referenced below. Especially if you think that this Lab idea is cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs. Link available in the reference section.



But when we dug deeper, we didn't find corruption in the classic sense: slimy gangsters lurking in the darkness, waiting to grease the palms of their friends. What we found was an overwhelming sense of helplessness. Our government was sick, because government employees felt helpless. They felt that they were not empowered to drive change. And when people feel stuck and helpless, they stop seeing their role in a bigger system. They start to think the work they do doesn't matter in driving change. And when that happens, things slow down, fall through the cracks and inefficiencies flourish.7

Charity Wayua TED Talk, November 2016



OPPORTUNITIES & CURIOSITIES



But I'm asking you to consider data — all kinds of data — as the beginning of the conversation and not the end. Because data alone will never give us a solution.6

Giorgia Lupi TED Talk, March 2017

So now what do we do with all of this information?

Now we start again. If you remember from the beginning, continuous improvement is a cycle - clarify, try, learn. The data we gathered should produce a list of curiosities and opportunities that then guide the next phase of the cycle.



OPPORTUNITIES & CURIOSITIES

TRIBE IS GROWING

EXHAUSTION, DISTRUST & COMMUNICATION **GAPS**

50% ATTRITION RISK

NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

LESSON OF MEH

OVERWHELMING **CHAOS**

ANGER & **HOPELESSNESS** Here is our list of the opportunities and curiosities that came out of this Phase:

- 1. How do we quantify hope? What about chaos? How do we do a better job of measuring these two outcomes so that we can reduce the contributing factors?
- Hopelessness isn't just limited to the foster family, it infuses all 2. parts of this system. How we increase the levels of hope between all parties? How do we help the feelings of partnership and forward-momentum in all conversations?
- 3 Looking at the reasons that foster parents are unlikely to renew their license, how do we further quantify disrespect or retaliation? Not just that we measure the feeling, but how do we capture the incidents that raise this feeling and help to reduce them?
- 4. How can we build trust with those around us in order to collaborate on change?
- How do we take the Lesson of Meh and do a better job of 5. capturing foster family satisfaction? How can we combine tools like sentiment analysis?
- How do we continue to measure health and well-being? 6.
- How do we quantify the impact of foster families not being 7. invited to hearings or meetings?
- 8. What are some of the competing responsibilities that keep social workers from updating foster parents about things like hearings? How do we measure and find solutions?
- 9. How much is permanency delayed by some of these things that aren't working as expected? What is the impact on the family, but also the systemic impact?

We have plenty more questions, but right now, we want you to focus on one - what is your role and responsibility in this? How can you take these learnings and make a difference in your sphere of influence? Remember that you aren't supposed to fix everything, but to clarify, try, and learn. What is one thing you can do this week?



WHAT NOW?

Where do we go from here? Well, great question. As we review our lessons, it seems clear to us that The Lab is an idea worth pursuing. Our tribe is growing and we are all starting to look at the problem in new ways.

Our mission has clarified over the last few months and we are planning to move forward with a focus on pursuing better data and better conversations.

We hope we have demonstrated how insightful data can help to guide conversations about finding solutions. We need to expand both the depth and reach of our Pool, as well as provide them with different methods of submitting data.

And more importantly, we want to help create opportunities for better conversations.



28 out of 32 responses to the question "What was the most satisfying part of participating in The Lab?" said that being heard and participating in change was the best part of the process.

What starts to happen to problems like hopelessness, exhaustion, distrust, and anger when we simply provide an opportunity for people to use their voices? And when those in power have access to a wider selection of data, how will that impact their chances of truly listening and responding?

We want to help develop a foster care culture that is marked by hope, creativity, and change. We are still ironing out the specifics, but for now, let us say that we have greatly appreciated every survey response, question, and conversation. We appreciate you making it through this (long) document and we are hopeful for what is to come.

To keep up with us, follow us on Facebook or sign up for our email list (available on our website). If you have specific questions about anything in the document or would like to talk further, email us at labstaff@fosterinnovationlab.com.

Cheers to change,

Lori Mackenzie Patty Shannon



- 1: DSHS Continuum of Care Report, December 2016
- 2: Washington State Office of the Ombudsman
- 3: The Children's Administration Practices and Procedures Guide
- 4: The Children's Administration Practices and Procedures Guide
- 5: Downloadable Caregiver Report to the Court
- 6: Lupia, Giorgia. (March, 2017). TED Talk: How we can find ourselves in data. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/giorgia lupi how we can find ourselves in data/transcript?language =en
- 7: Wayua, Charity. (November, 2016). TED Talk: A few ways to fix a government. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/charity_wayua_a_few_ways_to_fix_an_ailing_government



GLOSSARY

1624- CAFPT

Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 1624 was passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate on April 20, 2007. This bill requires regional and statewide quarterly meetings between Children's Administration (CA), foster parents, and the Foster Parent Association of Washington State (FPAWS). CAPTF is the Children's Administration Foster Parent Team, charged with organizing these meetings.

Agile Development

a set of principles for software development under which requirements and solutions evolve through the collaborative effort of self-organizing cross-functional teams.

CASA/GAL

CASA/GAL volunteers are appointed by judges to watch over and advocate for abused and neglected children, to make sure they don't get lost in the overburdened legal and social service system or languish in inappropriate group or foster homes. Volunteers stay with each case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. For many abused children, their

CASA/GAL volunteer will be the one constant adult presence in their lives.

Caregiver

Foster parent, relative or fictive kin caring for a foster child.

Caregiver Report to the

Court

A form to be filled out by the caregiver regarding a foster child in their care. This form is the main opportunity for a caregiver to share any information about the child in their care and their needs to the court.

^{*} Note that cach glossary term is a link where you can find more information - if they links aren't working, visit our website.



Children's Administration Public child welfare agency for the state of Washington. Works with children and families to identify their needs and develop a plan for services that support families and assure the safety and well-being of children. These services are designed to reduce the risk of abuse, find safe alternatives to out-of-home placement and assure safety and permanency for children in out-of-home care.

Hackathon

Event in which computer programmers and others involved in software development, including subject matter experts collaborate intensively on projects.

Continuous Improvement An ongoing effort to improve products, services, or processes. These efforts can seek "incremental" improvement over time or "breakthrough" improvement all at once

Department of Children, Youth and Families

Governor Inslee tasked a Commission with creating a blueprint for a new agency to have a cabinet-level department that will align state policies across agencies and have accountability for better using the state's resources to improve the lives of children and families. This new agency will ensure there is a focus on the well-being of children and reduce barriers to improving services so that better outcomes can be achieved. This bill has passed the House and currently is with the Senate.

Design Thinking

A methodology used by designers to solve complex problems, and find desirable solutions for clients. Design Thinking draws upon logic, imagination, intuition, and systemic reasoning, to explore possibilities of what could be-and to create desired outcomes that benefit the end user (the customer)

Fictive Kin

Individuals not related by blood or marriage but have a significant relationship with an individual that takes on the characteristics of a family relationship.

Foster Parent Pool

Our faithful group of foster parents who indicated they were willing to help and have been taking weekly and monthly surveys from the start of our experiment.

Health and Safety Visits

Face-to-face visits with children who have an open case with CA and regular visits with out-of-home caregivers and all known parents provides opportunity for ongoing assessments of the health, safety, and well-being of children. Regular visits with out-of-home caregivers increase opportunities to monitor child safety, can promote permanency, and provides the worker with information they can share with the parent

Permanency

Resolution to child's temporary legal status (being placed in out-of-home or foster care). The department has timelines that it is supposed to adhere to.

Placement Desk

Specially trained individuals with DSHS who place foster children needing homes with the appropriate placement.

Private Agency

Some foster parents choose to obtain their foster parent license through a private agency (many for a fee). Private agencies can provide additional staff, support and resources for a foster family that many times the state cannot.



GLOSSARY

RCW

Revised Code of Washington- the compilation of all permanent laws now in force. It is a collection of Session Laws (enacted by the Legislature, and signed by the Governor, or enacted via the initiative process), arranged by topic, with amendments added and repealed laws removed.

Response Bias

Also called survey bias is the tendency of a person to answer questions on a survey untruthfully or misleadingly. For example, they may feel pressure to give answers that are socially acceptable..

State Licensed

Foster families can become licensed through the state directly. This route does not cost any money and when they choose this route, there is very limited outside help available if they have difficulty understanding the system. Most areas have local support groups run through a non profit organization that can provide some assistance.

Visitation

Court ordered contact between children and biological parents (also for foster children and siblings who are not placed in the same home). To maintain family connections and bonds.

WAC

Washington Administrative Code- Regulations of executive branch agencies are issued by authority of statutes. Like legislation and the Constitution, regulations are a source of primary law in Washington State. The WAC codifies the regulations and arranges them by subject or agency.

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: <u>Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA)</u> <u>Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA)</u>

Date: 6/14/2017 3:42:40 PM

Subject: RE: Review and Comment: Report to Govenor about the May 31, 2017 Foster Parent

Retaliation Meeting

Hi Debbie. Thank you. Jennifer and Becky Taylor with Constituent Relations also got this message. The notes are inaccurate and we have advised her but will not edit. Apparently she is eager to 'finalize' the minutes as she has a phone call with someone from the Gov's office later today. Nothing to do but thanks for letting us know you got this. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Lynn, Debbie (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 7:53 AM

To: Odimba, Joel (DSHS/CA) <ODIMBJO@dshs.wa.gov>; Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

<LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: Review and Comment: Report to Govenor about the May 31, 2017 Foster Parent Retaliation Meeting

Good morning....

I have no idea why I received this email, did everyone else get one?

IF not, FYI. Debbie

From: Kathleen Arthur [mailto RCW 13.50.100 @live.com]

Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 4:39 AM

To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA) < strusj@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Review and Comment: Report to Govenor about the May 31, 2017 Foster Parent Retaliation Meeting

To Jennifer Strus

FYI

Foster Parent representatives have a phone appointment with the governors office tomorrow.

Below is the GOVERNORS summary report of the 5/29/2017 Foster Parent Retaliation Meeting, still in draft form.

I wonder if you would like to review the below report for accuracy? Or is there anything that we should mention?

I want to make sure that I am as factual as possible. I want to work with you in a non-adversarial manner to promote the best health and welfare for the children in the State of Washington Sincerely.

Kathleen Arthur RN BSN Child Welfare Watchdog

Foster Parent Retaliation Meeting: May 31 2017 10:30-12:00

Draft Summary Transcript: I was not allowed to go Facebook Live during public meeting, however, I was provided with a partial voice recording of this meeting that promotes transcript summary accuracy. I also gave Jennifer Strus an opportunity to review the report prior to our meeting with The Office of the Governor.

(Also to note: The 5/31/17 meeting started 30 minutes late because Jennifer Strus was late. Foster parents were told before the meeting by Meri Waterhouse that since Jeniffer was late, foster parents would not have time to talk. Also, statistics from Foster Parent's Speak Report were not allowed inside the executive conference room. No moderator was at the meeting)

Major issues reviewed from voice transcript of meeting:

- DSHS leaders stated <u>they did not know</u> about the wide spread foster parent reports of retaliation. Quote from Connie Lambert the Deputy Regional Administrator "I have never heard of a social worker being investigated for retaliation"
- 2. <u>There is no current complaint process for foster parents.</u> During the meeting it was identified that E-mailing Becky Taylor is the current foster parent complaint process...and since the leaders have not been notified of wide spread retaliation, this process does not work. Quote by Becky Taylor: "We review case by case and after it decays ...we raise it to a higher level."
- 3. There is no identified advocating body for foster parents. We are licenced, but not represented.
- 4. Foster Parents are afraid. There is a clear culture of fear. Fear of retaliation for reporting case worker misconduct was mentioned 21 times in a one hour meeting.
- 5. Foster Parents are dropping their licences because of the dshs culture of fear. The majority of foster parents who attended the retaliation meeting reported that they are not going to continue to be foster parents because of the dshs culture of foster parent fear of retaliation
- 6. Washington State Foster Child length of stay is excessive. In the State of Washington, foster Children are not adopted once legally free for years. Why? Once children are legally free, if they are discharged from dshs, then the dshs no longer gets to keep the childs ssi money, and or title IVe payments.
 - Compare the Oregon length of foster child stay to the Washington rate....prepare to be mind boggled.
- 7. DSHS is targeting poor children (who qualify for IVe payments) for foster care entry. (A recent review of call center screening outcomes revieled that the great majority of children screened into foster care for further intervention qualified for IVe or ssi disability. *Children with the same exact abuse and neglect claims, but did not qualifty for Title IVe were not screened into dshs for further intervention.*Why? (Hypothesis: If a child qualifies for IVe, the department gets paid by the federal government....state funds are saved. Targeting.)
- 8. DSHS is targeting disabled children for foster care entry and subsequent adoption bonus. (One disabled child is worth about five non-disabled title IVe kids. Follow the federal funds distribution. The ssi disability goes directly to the dshs...not the child or the caregiver. Currently disabled children are 2% of the general population in Washington State, but 50% of the forced terminations and subsequent state adoption. A 50% disabled child pool for forced adoption rate is a statistical impossibility without targeting.
- 9. FALSIFIED COURT REPORTS ARE COMMON DSHS CASEWORKER PRACTICE (SEE RECENT FEDERAL COURT RULING 15-55563.) Falsifying court reports by DSHS case workers is a common practice according to foster parents. The pergery of case workers was mentioned several times, no one working for DSHS seemed concerned about entering false documentation into court records. The foster parents stated that if they ask for court reports to be corrected, they are retaliated against. Falsified court records were mentioned 7 times in a one hour meeting.
- 10. DSHS supervisors screen and change material facts of children's case to improve chances of winning the termination case.
- 11. Successful IVe and ssi disability adoptions come with a big IVe adoption bonus for the local department. The DSHS are paid IVe funds by headcount. If census runs low, the department must hold on to legally free kids, or find new kids, who qualify for title IVe to keep a steady money stream coming into the department.
- 12. Foster Parent 1621 leaders are not given updated lists of the foster parents that they are supposed

to represent

- 13. RETALIATION was reported in several scenarios:
 - A common form of retaliation is to reduce the child's rate assessment. This was expressed to be a common phenomena during the meeting.
 - Foster parents report that the case workers make untrue complaints against their licence as a form of retaliation. Last year alone there were 900 unfounded/untrue/retaliative reports made by case workers against foster parents.
 - Obscure complaints on foster parents licence are becoming common, such as:
 - Foster Parents are too attached to child
 - Foster parent are reprimanded for getting a lawyer,
 - Foster parent reprimanded in court for cultural incompetence, after their child was in the home for four years,
 - Also reported were frequent threats to remove child if the foster parent does not comply or complains about case worker misconduct
 - Several actual retaliation removals were reported. We ran out of time to be able to listen to all the stories of retaliation.
- 14. Children are being transferred into foster homes with no medical records on a regular basis. Children are in harms way by this practice. Examples include: Children who have attempted to commited suicide and no info given to foster mother. Children with seizures, and cancer, and diabeties are given to foster parents routienly with no medical info, and no report of any medical problem. THIS MUST STOP IMMEDIATLY. WE NEED A WRITTEN TRANSFER FORM THAT FOLLOWS THE CHILD.
- 16. Children are being transferred into foster homes with no school records on a regular basis. Examples of foster parents being treated poorly when asking for simple records were presented.
- 15. During the meeting the foster parents stated they want improvements immediately, or they are going to go on strike July 4th.

If 30% of the licenced foster parents sign a union card, there will be a vote. If 50% of licenced foster parents sign a union card there will be a new foster parent union.

In the discussion it was revealed that the last talk of unionization was 10 years ago. The 1621 meetings were a result of those negotiations.

One participant was a lawyer who represents 70 local foster families who have been talking of striking. Kathleen Arthur stated she had hundreds of people on face book live very concerned about this issue, and are talking about a strike also. The foster parents talked about going on strike July 4th if we do not have progress on resolving the major issues. It will be a silent strike....the foster parents will not take any new kids starting July 4th 2017.

Quotes:

"I am a lawyer who represent about **70 foster parents**, and they report they are being beat up, retaliation is a problem, they are talking about going on strike"

"Two days after I made the case worker report the harassment started."

"Case workers are egregiously incompetent"

"My foster children were picked up at school...I dont know what happened to them or why they were taken"

"Foster parents are treated like crap. "

"Information is inaccurate"

"The case workers are putting false information into the court reports on a regular basis...we are retaliated against if we ask them to change the court report to the truth."

"They act like bulldogs"

"I am representing foster parents on Facebook live, there are **approximately 700 foster parents** who want to participate with this meeting, but are afraid to be identified." (There were over 5000 views, and angry comments within 24 hours of posting that a facebook live feed was not permitted)

"I have interviewed over **200 foster parents**, and they (the caseworkers) are truly doing retaliation" Representative Michelle Caldier from the 26th district.

"Unsolicited, we count about 20% of the foster parents who have reached out to various organizations who

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal

want a foster parent union and are willing to go on strike"

Current PLAN:

DSHS PLAN: Jennifer Strus wants to meet in 2.5 months.

FOSTER PARENTS PLAN: STRIKE JULY 4TH....NO NEW KIDS ACCEPTED AS FORM OF PROTEST. WE ARE ASKING FOR THE FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS:

GOVERNORS POWERS

Emergency Powers

Declare a state of emergency in the Foster Care System.

Petition President for help to change the Title IVe distribution methodology

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Trigger emergency powers for situations requiring immediate attention.

Assign mediators for negotiations.

Order an investigative committee to look into the above 17 issues that were identified during the retaliation meeting

Request the FBI investigate the reported abuse of state powers.

Request the Dept of Justice investigate the State wide practice of falsifying court records.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS:

Immediate Action:

- 1. Reduce child length of stay in Foster Care. (Compare length of stay to Oregon) (Legally free kids are being held by dshs and not allowed to become adopted because of steady ssi and title IVe income. Department looses income when kids are discharged.
- 2. Stop targeting of disabled children for foster care.
- 3. Stop targeting of poor children (qualify for IVe) for foster care entrance.
- 4. Stop allowing case managers to place false information into retaliative reports against foster parents. (There were 900 non-founded retaliative reports against foster parents licence per year)
- 5. Create process (mediation) for foster parent grievances.
- 6. Monthly 1621 Meetings on fixed date, with mediator.
- 7. Sammys law from California to be introduced as Washington legislation
- 8. Track complaints by INDEPENDENT BODY. Complaints are not elevating to a level of problem solving leaders.
- 9. Whistle Blower protection by statute.
- 10. Allow facebook live during public meetings.
- 11. Stop Our Kids App. Five years is too long to produce a simple app. Obstructions are never going to allow this app to move forward. Use Epic as your traching computer softwear. It is used worldwide to track medical and social info and works with the certification process to collect any kind of data you want...this is already available and has all the kinks worked out already.
- 12. New complaint and resolution process.
- 13. Foster Parent Bill of rights
- 14. Ombudsman are ineffective because they have no authority to introduce change.
- 15. Stop "Foster Parents Speak"This survey is expensive and useless. It tells us things are bad in the foster care world, but does not assess the actual process. We need accreditation. JACO is a form of professional accreditation that will assess our professional duties, and suggest improvements in care such as a mandatory transfer form when kids are moved. that has the educational and medical records....epic is medical record based.

- 16. Rotating independent research reports on implemented stratagies. Also, report directly to governors office.
- 17. Educational and medical records within 12 hours of first placement, and at each subsequent transfer. Start Immediately.
- 18. State Attorney Generals to form a branch that will serve and protect foster parents. Currently the Attorney General protects the social workers, the children and the legislators, but not the foster parents.
- 19. Bi weekly meetings to iron out foster parent issues to avoid a foster parent strike

Please comment on the above report asap so I will have a chance to review the report before the meeting tomorrow.

I will keep all individual comments confidential, if you request it. Sincerely,

Kathleen Arthur

RCW 13.50.100 @live.com

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Waterhouse, Meri (DSHS/CA)

Date: 6/15/2017 12:10:51 AM

Subject: RE: Review and Comment: Report to Govenor about the May 31, 2017 Foster Parent

Retaliation Meeting

Always good to have allies. Thank you for sharing, Meri. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel Director: Field Operations Children's Administration lambecm@dshs.wa.gov 360-902-7982

From: Waterhouse, Meri (DSHS/CA) Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 2:45 PM

To: Geiger, Barbara (DSHS/CA) <GeigeBL@dshs.wa.gov>; Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

<LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>; Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA) <strusj@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Robert Hunner < rhunner@nwresource.org>

Subject: FW: Review and Comment: Report to Govenor about the May 31, 2017 Foster Parent Retaliation Meeting

FYI

Meri Waterhouse, Program Manager

Foster Care Recruitment & Retention

Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

1115 Washington St., S.E.

PO Box 45710

Olympia, WA 98504-5710

360-902-8035 - phone

waterml@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

Consider becoming a foster parent – kids from your community who have been abused and neglected need your help. Will it be easy? Not every day. . . Will it be worth it? Absolutely! www.dshs.wa.gov/fosterparents

From: RCW 42.56.250(4) [mailto RCW 42.56.250(4) @yahoo.com]

Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2017 2:10 PM

thompson@olivecrest.org>

Subject: Fw: Review and Comment: Report to Govenor about the May 31, 2017 Foster Parent Retaliation Meeting

Did you folks see this? I'm disturbed that this is being submitted to the governor as the report of the retaliation meeting. She was a LONE voice and certainly does not represent me or the foster folks I know or how the meeting went. She doesn't even have the "1624" term correct!

What can we do to counteract this report and show we are not behind this as a united voice?

I don't have emails for everyone so please forward as appropriate.

Teena Williams

1624 Region 3N rep

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

On Wednesday, June 14, 2017, 4:38 AM, Kathleen Arthur RCW 13.50.100 @live.com wrote:

To Jennifer Strus

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Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002407

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I will keep all individual comments confidential, if you request it. Sincerely,
Kathleen Arthur
RCW 13.50.100 @live.com

From: Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) To: Strus, Jennifer (DSHS/CA)

Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 7/5/2017 4:48:53 PM

Subject: FW: URGENT Update to May 31 Foster Parent Retaliation Meeting.

Attachments: Record_20170627114827.m4a

fyi

Edith Hitchings, Director Executive Staff Division

Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

360-902-8324/hitched@dshs.wa.gov

Tell us how we are doing by clicking on the link and taking this short anonymous survey https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CAESDSURVEY

Transforming Lives

From: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) Sent: Thursday, June 29, 2017 11:53 AM

To: Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) <HitchED@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: URGENT Update to May 31 Foster Parent Retaliation Meeting.

Just forwarding this to you for your information. I am not responding to her. She did record parts of the meeting and I'm not sure if this was after she agreed not to record.

From: Kathleen Arthur [mailto RCW 13.50.100 @live.com]
Sent: Wednesday, June 28, 2017 7:14 AM

To: Kagi, Ruth < ruth.kagi@leg.wa.gov >; michelle.caldier@leg.wa; Caldier, Michelle < michelle.caldier@leg.wa.gov >; Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) < TayloReS@dshs.wa.gov >; Cantore,

Victoria (GOV) < victoria.cantore@gov.wa.gov>

Subject: URGENT Update to May 31 Foster Parent Retaliation Meeting.

On May 31, 2017, about a dozen brave Foster Parents came to Olympia Washington to share their story of abuse and mistreatment. About government over reach, about retaliation by government employees who are supposed to serve the public, about the creation of a culture of fear.

The stories told that day were almost clones of each other.

I have discovered a disturbing pattern that I feel is urgent to share with you. I am a nursing researcher, and a Child Welfare Advocate. I have worked in DC and I have been a nurse and foster mom for decades.

Here are my observation:

Foster Parent + Legally Free Child (should) = adoption and happy ending

But what is happening according to the Foster Parents in the May 31 Retaliation meeting is:

Foster Parent + Legally Free Child + YEARS OF CHILD LIMBO held hostage by dshs = Frustrated Foster Parents.

So why would DSHS hold on to legally free kids for years?

If I could pick up a magic wand and wish that all safe, legally free children currently living with the approved adoptive family were adopted in 30 days....dshs would go broke.

Washington State DSHS is financially DEPENDENT upon the Title IVe income provided by the legally free in limbo children.

During the Foster Parent Retaliation Meeting, they described a culture of fear.

When foster parents advocate for the child to speed up permanency a holy host of retaliation occurs, as you can hear in the tape of the meeting that is attached.

This must be investigated.

Purposeful, documented, indisputable, statewide retaliation by government officials to the public (foster parents) is an atrocity that must not go un checked. We must Demand the childrens freedom from a life in limbo as a ward of the court, to be safe and loved in the arms of their family, free of fear.

DSHS is holding legally free kids in limbo for years. Why? To balance the departments budget?

The DSHS has been placed in between a rock and a hard place. They must hold on to legally free kids for years and years in limbo to balance the books.

Geek data:

Needed

- 1. total # of foster parents in WA(#=100%)
- Total # of foster parents with legally free kids who they are adopting the child in their home. (What percent is this of the total foster parent pool) This seems to be a very specific subset of the foster parents who attended the meeting and are complaining of government over reach and abuse, so the good new is this seems to represent a smaller pool of discontent foster parents, and not the whole of foster parents in the State of Washington.

I do have some great out of the box solutions, if you would like more info, let me know.

From: Devdev Sig < RCW 13.50.100 @gmail.com > Sent: Tuesday, June 27, 2017 1:33 PM

To: RCW 13.50.100 @live.com
Subject: One of two dshs foster parent retaliation meeting.

From: Caldier, Rep. Michelle < Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov>

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 10/26/2017 2:23:30 AM

Subject: Constituent Issue

Connie,

I received the following email from a student in County and wanted to share it with you.

It started on October 9, 2017. I was coming into my school, RCW 13.50.100 High School, for an emergency meeting with my counselor that my mother had set up because I had gotten in trouble with her. We get into the conference room and I couldn't deal with the lies that my mother was spewing and me always covering her up or keeping my mouth shut whenever she told me to. I blew up because I got so angry and I guess I said some things that had concerned my counselor enough that she pulled me aside and wanted to talk to me alone. When she pulled me aside I had broken down, sobbing and having a panic attack. I told her everything my mother did to me and was doing to me.

Every since I can remember my mother has always been dramatically up and down with her mood swings. She was a narcissistic, she still is, but that made it difficult on my family's life. She got diagnosed as about 10 years or so ago, and has always refused to admit it. She has spent the last 10 years denying that she is she will obviously think she doesn't have any problems.

Back to things, my parents got divorced in November? of 2009 and that's when things really went south, and fast. My mother literally got knocked off her rocker, she went absolutely mental, started accusing my father of domestic abuse and and my middle brother of abuse as well. She tried to get my father locked up for domestic abuse and she succeeded in getting my middle brother locked up in juvie a lot of times. I always remember the cops showing up at the door because my mother had called them based off of false accusations against my father and middle brother.

Don't get me wrong, my brother is mental and my father isn't perfect by any means, and I'm not defending anyone, i'm just simply stating that my mother is the master of false accusations and being two-faced. She is always playing the victim and I had grown up seeing this as normal and didn't know any better. I didn't know that my mother and father hitting each other wasn't normal, that the cops showing up at my house more than once a month asking to speak to either my father or brother wasn't normal. I had grown up thinking this was just fine and dandy, normal family business.

One particularly stressful night was when my father had come home later than he said he would be arriving and my mother had automatically jumped to the conclusion that he was out cheating and started hitting him and throwing things. My brother seeing this got all riled up and joined in on the action, but instead of just targeting one person he targeted everyone and specifically me. He would throw things at me, threaten to kill me all the time, and hurt me physically and mentally. He learned all that from my mother, which doesn't make that his fault but it also doesn't excuse his behavior.

My mother grabbed me off the floor and shoved me into the van, and we took off to the neighborhood Burger King on the RCW 13.50.100. We stayed the night in the parking lot and the next day went back home. My mother pretending everything was fine and like nothing major had happened the night before.

It was always these things that happened, she was always starting things and then playing the victim afterwards and pretending it never happened. She loved to take video recordings or audio recordings falsely claiming things. For one instance, she took a video recording I believe, claiming that my father was hitting her and you could hear her screaming for my father to "get off her" when he was across the room telling her to knock it off. She then panned then camera down to show the bruises and scratch marks she left on herself claiming that my father did it to her.

She didn't even protect me when my brother was RCW 13.50.100 me in 2010. She claimed I was saying it for attention and that I was making things up. He RCW 13.50.100 me for three years and she did nothing to stop it.

This is just a little glimpse of what it was like in the daily life.

Back to October 9th, when I shared all this with my counselor, she immediately called the police and then

the police came and asked me to tell them everything I had already shared with. Then the police asked me what I wanted to do, If I wanted to go back home with my mother, or get placed in foster care. I chose foster care because I do not feel safe at home. She can literally snap at any second and hurt me or even worse. She was always playing mind games with me and it was like walking on eggshells around her. I didn't know what to say, when to say it and if I was going to trigger her and she would hit me or play with my head for days on end. I had RCW 70.02.020 around her and I was RCW 70.02.020

I did

not want to come back to my mother. I knew that I wouldn't be able to handle it and I would try running away. My father told me numerous times to just keep my head down and survive another 4 years until I turned 18. That didn't happen.

I didn't know what to do so on Friday October 6th, and Saturday October 7th, I had tried running away in the middle of the night. Both nights I was caught and couldn't leave. I can't handle my mother, I become I have RCW 70.02.020, and I cannot deal with the mind fuckery that my mother puts me through. I'm sorry to use to words but its the only way to express the way she does things.

I love the foster family that I am in now. is really nice, and I can see myself staying with her until I turn 18. I do not feel safe going back to my mother. I cannot stress that enough. I feel stable, mentally, emotionally, physically, with my current family right now.

They are wanting to send me back and I don't think I have the mental capacity to handle that. They still haven't given me an attorney, and I would very much like one.

I would also like to file a dependency on myself, I don't know how that works but i'll get in contact with someone who does.

After this child contacted my office via email, we are told that her case worker would not allow her to contact me again and would not allow access to the internet. She left a voicemail and we learned today that she was removed from the foster home and placed in a therapeutic foster home instead. It is my understanding that the child has not been provided legal representation, and the foster mother fears retaliation from the case worker. Please let me know what steps I need to take to ensure the teen is able to receive the best and safest outcome.

Warmest Regards,

Michelle Caldier

State Representative 26th Legislative District

(360) 786-7802

* Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov

whelle Caldier

Sign Up for my e-newsletter!

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA)

Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA)

Gunnell, Kim (DSHS/CA)

Date: 10/26/2017 3:50:13 PM FW: Constituent Issue

Attachments: Re: Constituent Issue

RE: Constituent Issue (1)

RE: Constituent Issue (2)

Subject:

Hello ladies....

See below. I got this same message (before the placement change) from Ross Hunter....to whom Rep Caldier sent her initial message. I have attached that message and the information I received from the AA. Will you please assist me in drafting a response for the Rep. There is so much more to the story that we cannot share.....sadly. Thanks for your help. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration Washington State Department of Social and Health Services 360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Caldier, Rep. Michelle [mailto:Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 7:24 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Constituent Issue

Connie.

I received the following email from a student in County and wanted to share it with you.

It started on October 9, 2017. I was coming into my school, RCW 13.50.100 High School, for an emergency meeting with my counselor that my mother had set up because I had gotten in trouble with her. We get into the conference room and I couldn't deal with the lies that my mother was spewing and me always covering her up or keeping my mouth shut whenever she told me to. I blew up because I got so angry and I guess I said some things that had concerned my counselor enough that she pulled me aside and wanted to talk to me alone. When she pulled me aside I had broken down, sobbing and having a panic attack. I told her everything my mother did to me and was doing to me.

Every since I can remember my mother has always been dramatically up and down with her mood swings. She was a narcissistic, she still is, but that made it difficult on my family's life. She got diagnosed as about 10 years or so ago, and has always refused to admit it. She has spent the last 10 years denying that she will obviously think she doesn't have any problems.

Back to things, my parents got divorced in November? of 2009 and that's when things really went south, and fast. My mother literally got knocked off her rocker, she went absolutely mental, started accusing my father of domestic abuse and and my middle brother of abuse as well. She tried to get my father locked up for domestic abuse and she succeeded in getting my middle brother locked up in juvie a lot of times. I always remember the cops showing up at the door because my mother had called them based off of false accusations against my father and middle brother.

Don't get me wrong, my brother is mental and my father isn't perfect by any means, and I'm not defending anyone, i'm just simply stating that my mother is the master of false accusations and being two-faced. She is always playing the victim and I had grown up seeing this as normal and didn't know any better. I didn't investigate West / Abramo, Allegra

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002415

know that my mother and father hitting each other wasn't normal, that the cops showing up at my house more than once a month asking to speak to either my father or brother wasn't normal. I had grown up thinking this was just fine and dandy, normal family business.

One particularly stressful night was when my father had come home later than he said he would be arriving and my mother had automatically jumped to the conclusion that he was out cheating and started hitting him and throwing things. My brother seeing this got all riled up and joined in on the action, but instead of just targeting one person he targeted everyone and specifically me. He would throw things at me, threaten to kill me all the time, and hurt me physically and mentally. He learned all that from my mother, which doesn't make that his fault but it also doesn't excuse his behavior.

My mother grabbed me off the floor and shoved me into the van, and we took off to the neighborhood Burger King on the RCW 13.50.100. We stayed the night in the parking lot and the next day went back home. My mother pretending everything was fine and like nothing major had happened the night before.

It was always these things that happened, she was always starting things and then playing the victim afterwards and pretending it never happened. She loved to take video recordings or audio recordings falsely claiming things. For one instance, she took a video recording I believe, claiming that my father was hitting her and you could hear her screaming for my father to "get off her" when he was across the room telling her to knock it off. She then panned then camera down to show the bruises and scratch marks she left on herself claiming that my father did it to her.

She didn't even protect me when my brother was RCW 13.50.100 me in 2010. She claimed I was saying it for attention and that I was making things up. He RCW 13.50.100 me for three years and she did nothing to stop it.

This is just a little glimpse of what it was like in the daily life.

Back to October 9th, when I shared all this with my counselor, she immediately called the police and then the police came and asked me to tell them everything I had already shared with. Then the police asked me what I wanted to do, If I wanted to go back home with my mother, or get placed in foster care. I chose foster care because I do not feel safe at home. She can literally snap at any second and hurt me or even worse. She was always playing mind games with me and it was like walking on eggshells around her. I didn't know what to say, when to say it and if I was going to trigger her and she would hit me or play with my head for days on end. I had RCW 70.02.020 around her and I was RCW 70.02.020.

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not want to come back to my mother. I knew that I wouldn't be able to handle it and I would try running away. My father told me numerous times to just keep my head down and survive another 4 years until I turned 18. That didn't happen.

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I would also like to file a dependency on myself, I don't know how that works but i'll get in contact with someone who does.

After this child contacted my office via email, we are told that her case worker would not allow her to contact me again and would not allow access to the internet. She left a voicemail and we learned today that she was removed from the foster home and placed in a therapeutic foster home instead. It is my understanding that the child has not been provided legal representation, and the foster mother fears retaliation from the case worker. Please let me know what steps I need to take to ensure the teen is able to receive the best and safest outcome.

Warmest Regards,

Sulle Caldier

Michelle Caldier State Representative 26th Legislative District ((360) 786-7802

* Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov

From: Hunter, Ross (DCYF)

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 10/25/2017 2:42:32 AM Subject: Re: Constituent Issue

Im happy to keep sending these to you and get to g updates without pii. Thanks for following up.

----- Original message ------

From: "Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)" <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Date: 10/24/17 9:08 PM (GMT-05:00)

To: "Hunter, Ross (DCYF)" <ross.hunter@dcyf.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Greetings!

From her message this young woman appears to be 12 years of age or older. As such CA is obligated (age 12 and up) by policy, to inquire of a youth when they come into our custody and on an annual basis whether they want legal representation and then to assist them in securing representation...which is appointed by the court. It appears that this young woman came into CA's custody via a Law Enforcement Protective Custody order on 10/9. We would have had a shelter care hearding....it may be contested.

I am following up with the local office to see if they can identify this case (should be) based on the details provided and then confirm she has representation or that the request is in process given she references an attorney in her email. She came in on a Monday....Rep Caldier sent the message on 10/23...a Monday. Two weeks. Not an alarming amount of time yet regarding the representation appointment process.

As challenging as these messages are to read I suspect we are still working towards reunification with a family member....that is our job. It is also very possible there is an overarching family court matter engaged here as well given the parent's reported less than positive divorce that could be a barrier. There is a reason she lives with her mother and not her father.

More to come.... C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Hunter, Ross (DCYF)

Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 12:59 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Fwd: Constituent Issue

How do we get a lawyer for this young lady?

Thanks

Ross

----- Original message -----

From: "Johnston, Kari (DCYF)" < kari.johnston@dcyf.wa.gov>

Date: 10/24/17 1:00 PM (GMT-05:00)

To: "Caldier, Michelle" < michelle.caldier@leg.wa.gov >, "Hunter, Ross (DCYF)" < ross.hunter@dcyf.wa.gov >

Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Good morning Representative Caldier,

Thank you for forwarding the below email from the student in County. Secretary Hunter is out of the state this week so I will ensure this is addressed once he's returned. As you know and acknowledged below, his unique role doesn't provide authority in the child welfare world just yet, but we'll see what resources/avenues we could pass along to assist her.

Very best,

Kari Johnston

Executive Assistant to Secretary Ross Hunter Department of Children, Youth, and Families

1500 Jefferson Street SE | Olympia, WA 98501 Desk: 360-407-7909 | Cell: 360-789-4239 Kari.Johnston@dcyf.wa.gov | dcyf.wa.gov

From: Caldier, Rep. Michelle [mailto:Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov]

Sent: Monday, October 23, 2017 3:39 PM

Subject: Constituent Issue

Ross,

I received the following email from a student in County and wanted to share it with you.

It started on October 9, 2017. I was coming into my school, RCW 13.50.100 High School, for an emergency meeting with my counselor that my mother had set up because I had gotten in trouble with her. We get into the conference room and I couldn't deal with the lies that my mother was spewing and me always covering her up or keeping my mouth shut whenever she told me to. I blew up because I got so angry and I guess I said some things that had concerned my counselor enough that she pulled me aside and wanted to talk to me alone. When she pulled me aside I had broken down, sobbing and having a panic attack. I told her everything my mother did to me and was doing to me.

Every since I can remember my mother has always been dramatically up and down with her mood swings. She was a narcissistic, she still is, but that made it difficult on my family's life. She got diagnosed as about 10 years or so ago, and has always refused to admit it. She has spent the last 10 years denying that she is she will obviously think she doesn't have any problems.

Back to things, my parents got divorced in November? of 2009 and that's when things really went south, and fast. My mother literally got knocked off her rocker, she went absolutely mental, started accusing my father of domestic abuse and and my middle brother of abuse as well. She tried to get my father locked up for domestic abuse and she succeeded in getting my middle brother locked up in juvie a lot of times. I always remember the cops showing up at the door because my mother had called them based off of false

accusations against my father and middle brother.

Don't get me wrong, my brother is mental and my father isn't perfect by any means, and I'm not defending anyone, i'm just simply stating that my mother is the master of false accusations and being two-faced. She is always playing the victim and I had grown up seeing this as normal and didn't know any better. I didn't know that my mother and father hitting each other wasn't normal, that the cops showing up at my house more than once a month asking to speak to either my father or brother wasn't normal. I had grown up thinking this was just fine and dandy, normal family business.

One particularly stressful night was when my father had come home later than he said he would be arriving and my mother had automatically jumped to the conclusion that he was out cheating and started hitting him and throwing things. My brother seeing this got all riled up and joined in on the action, but instead of just targeting one person he targeted everyone and specifically me. He would throw things at me, threaten to kill me all the time, and hurt me physically and mentally. He learned all that from my mother, which doesn't make that his fault but it also doesn't excuse his behavior.

My mother grabbed me off the floor and shoved me into the van, and we took off to the neighborhood Burger King on the RCW 13.50.100. We stayed the night in the parking lot and the next day went back home. My mother pretending everything was fine and like nothing major had happened the night before.

It was always these things that happened, she was always starting things and then playing the victim afterwards and pretending it never happened. She loved to take video recordings or audio recordings falsely claiming things. For one instance, she took a video recording I believe, claiming that my father was hitting her and you could hear her screaming for my father to "get off her" when he was across the room telling her to knock it off. She then panned then camera down to show the bruises and scratch marks she left on herself claiming that my father did it to her.

She didn't even protect me when my brother was RCW 13.50.100 me in 2010. She claimed I was saying it for attention and that I was making things up. He stop it.

This is just a little glimpse of what it was like in the daily life.

Back to October 9th, when I shared all this with my counselor, she immediately called the police and then the police came and asked me to tell them everything I had already shared with. Then the police asked me what I wanted to do, If I wanted to go back home with my mother, or get placed in foster care. I chose foster care because I do not feel safe at home. She can literally snap at any second and hurt me or even worse. She was always playing mind games with me and it was like walking on eggshells around her. I didn't know what to say, when to say it and if I was going to trigger her and she would hit me or play with my head for days on end. I had RCW 70.02.020 around her and I was RCW 70.02.020 RCW 70.02.020

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not want to come back to my mother. I knew that I wouldn't be able to handle it and I would try running away. My father told me numerous times to just keep my head down and survive another 4 years until I turned 18. That didn't happen.

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They are wanting to send me back and I don't think I have the mental capacity to handle that. They still haven't given me an attorney, and I would very much like one.

I would also like to file a dependency on myself, I don't know how that works but i'll get in contact with someone who does.

I am scheduling a phone call with her to gather more information, and understand your current position with the agency. Please let me know if you have any ideas of how we can help her.

Warmest Regards,

Michelle Caldier

State Representative 26th Legislative District ((360) 786-7802

* Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov

Suchelle Caldier

From: Petters, Ursula (DSHS/CA)

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 10/25/2017 3:35:04 PM Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

I do know this case. RCW 13.50.100

. Case RCW 13.50.100 . It is RCW 13.50.100

. The present foster home appears to be interfering in re-

. The young lady wa RCW 13.50.100

She was RCW 13.50.100

unification. RCW 13.50.100

She is very

sophisticated and can be charismatic. She will turn on the tears, become very dramatic. We had a two hour FTDM on this case yesterday. It got ugly.

She is RCW 13.50.100

. We

have no active safety threats at this time. We have RCW 13.50.100

Mother RCW 13.50.100

The present foster home was in the FTDM and joining the young lady in the drama. She is interfering with our ability to work with the family. We are RCW 13.50.100

We are in communication with father RCW 13.50.100

We have had previous issues with her present foster home in regard to foster parent interfering with case plans. We are RCW 13.50.100

Again we have no active safety threats on this case.

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 6:12 PM

To: Petters, Ursula (DSHS/CA) <PETTEUR@DSHS.WA.GOV> Cc: March, John (DSHS/CA) <MARCHJR@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: FW: Constituent Issue

Hi Ursula...

See string below. We cannot and I won't share case specific details with either Rep Caldier or Mr. Hunter. I hope you can recognize this case....there is some info that is recent but there is no identifying information other than the location. Might you confirm for me that we are working on getting representation for this young woman since she is certainly asking about it.

It seems to me that we are likely working on reunification given her comments 'they want to send me back'. It is hard to explain to external partners that it is our job to safely get kids home... even when there is family conflict. I appreciate any help you can offer. *C*.

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Hunter, Ross (DCYF)

Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 12:59 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: Fwd: Constituent Issue

How do we get a lawyer for this young lady?

Thanks

Ross

----- Original message -----

From: "Johnston, Kari (DCYF)" < <u>kari.johnston@dcyf.wa.gov</u>>

Date: 10/24/17 1:00 PM (GMT-05:00)

To: "Caldier, Michelle" < michelle.caldier@leg.wa.gov>, "Hunter, Ross (DCYF)" < ross.hunter@dcvf.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Good morning Representative Caldier,

Thank you for forwarding the below email from the student in County. Secretary Hunter is out of the state this week so I will ensure this is addressed once he's returned. As you know and acknowledged below, his unique role doesn't provide authority in the child welfare world just yet, but we'll see what resources/avenues we could pass along to assist her.

Very best,

Kari Johnston

Executive Assistant to Secretary Ross Hunter Department of Children, Youth, and Families

1500 Jefferson Street SE | Olympia, WA 98501 Desk: 360-407-7909 | Cell: 360-789-4239 Kari.Johnston@dcyf.wa.gov | dcyf.wa.gov

From: Caldier, Rep. Michelle [mailto:Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov]

Sent: Monday, October 23, 2017 3:39 PM

To: Hunter, Ross (DCYF) < ross.hunter@dcvf.wa.gov> Cc: Johnston, Kari (DCYF) < kari.johnston@dcyf.wa.gov

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DCYF - 002423

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal

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Don't get me wrong, my brother is mental and my father isn't perfect by any means, and I'm not defending anyone, i'm just simply stating that my mother is the master of false accusations and being two-faced. She is always playing the victim and I had grown up seeing this as normal and didn't know any better. I didn't know that my mother and father hitting each other wasn't normal, that the cops showing up at my house more than once a month asking to speak to either my father or brother wasn't normal. I had grown up thinking this was just fine and dandy, normal family business.

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They are wanting to send me back and I don't think I have the mental capacity to handle that. They still haven't given me an attorney, and I would very much like one.

I would also like to file a dependency on myself, I don't know how that works but i'll get in contact with someone who does.

I am scheduling a phone call with her to gather more information, and understand your current position with the agency. Please let me know if you have any ideas of how we can help her.

Warmest Regards,

Michelle Caldier

State Representative 26th Legislative District

(360) 786-7802

* Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov

Vichelle Caldier

From: Petters, Ursula (DSHS/CA)

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 10/25/2017 3:39:44 PM Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Here is an update-youth is melting down in school right now as she has been told she is moving. Two of my workers will be going to get her as I write this.

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:39 AM

To: Petters, Ursula (DSHS/CA) <PETTEUR@DSHS.WA.GOV> Cc: March, John (DSHS/CA) < MARCHJR@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Thank you, Ursula. Very clear. VPA = no Dependency = No attorney. Got it. Appreciate you taking the time. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration Washington State Department of Social and Health Services 360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Petters, Ursula (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:35 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: March, John (DSHS/CA) < MARCHJR@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

I do know this case. RCW 13.50.100

The present foster home appears to be interfering in re-

unification. RCW 13.50.100

. The young lady wa RCW 13.50.100

She was RCW 13.50.100

. She is very

sophisticated and can be charismatic. She will turn on the tears, become very dramatic. We had a two hour FTDM on this case yesterday. It got ugly.

She is RCW 13.50.100

We

have no active safety threats at this time. We have RCW 13.50.100

Mother RCW 13.50.100

The present foster home was in the FTDM and joining the young lady in the drama. She is interfering with our ability to work with the family. We are RCW 13.50.100

We are in communication with father, RCW 13.50.100

We have had previous issues with her present foster home in regard to foster parent interfering with case plans. We are RCW 13.50.100

Again we have no active safety threats on this case. Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal

DCYF - 002426

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 6:12 PM

To: Petters, Ursula (DSHS/CA) < <u>PETTEUR@DSHS.WA.GOV</u>> **Cc:** March, John (DSHS/CA) < <u>MARCHJR@dshs.wa.gov</u>>

Subject: FW: Constituent Issue

Hi Ursula...

See string below. We cannot and I won't share case specific details with either Rep Caldier or Mr. Hunter. I hope you can recognize this case....there is some info that is recent but there is no identifying information other than the location. Might you confirm for me that we are working on getting representation for this young woman since she is certainly asking about it.

It seems to me that we are likely working on reunification given her comments 'they want to send me back'. It is hard to explain to external partners that it is our job to safely get kids home... even when there is family conflict. I appreciate any help you can offer. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Hunter, Ross (DCYF)

Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 12:59 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Fwd: Constituent Issue

How do we get a lawyer for this young lady?

Thanks

Ross

----- Original message -----

From: "Johnston, Kari (DCYF)" < kari.johnston@dcvf.wa.gov>

Date: 10/24/17 1:00 PM (GMT-05:00)

To: "Caldier, Michelle" < michelle.caldier@leg.wa.gov >, "Hunter, Ross (DCYF)" < ross.hunter@dcyf.wa.gov >

Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Good morning Representative Caldier,

Thank you for forwarding the below email from the student in County. Secretary Hunter is out of the state this week so I will ensure this is addressed once he's returned. As you know and acknowledged below, his unique role doesn't provide authority in the child welfare world just yet, but we'll see what resources/avenues we could pass along to assist her.

Very best,

Kari Johnston

Executive Assistant to Secretary Ross Hunter Department of Children, Youth, and Families

Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002427 1500 Jefferson Street SE | Olympia, WA 98501

Desk: 360-407-7909 | Cell: 360-789-4239 Kari.Johnston@dcyf.wa.gov | dcyf.wa.gov

From: Caldier, Rep. Michelle [mailto:Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov]

Sent: Monday, October 23, 2017 3:39 PM

Subject: Constituent Issue

Ross,

I received the following email from a student in County and wanted to share it with you.

It started on October 9, 2017. I was coming into my school, RCW 13.50.100 High School, for an emergency meeting with my counselor that my mother had set up because I had gotten in trouble with her. We get into the conference room and I couldn't deal with the lies that my mother was spewing and me always covering her up or keeping my mouth shut whenever she told me to. I blew up because I got so angry and I guess I said some things that had concerned my counselor enough that she pulled me aside and wanted to talk to me alone. When she pulled me aside I had broken down, sobbing and having a panic attack. I told her everything my mother did to me and was doing to me.

Every since I can remember my mother has always been dramatically up and down with her mood swings. She was a narcissistic, she still is, but that made it difficult on my family's life. She got diagnosed as about 10 years or so ago, and has always refused to admit it. She has spent the last 10 years denying that she is she will obviously think she doesn't have any problems.

Back to things, my parents got divorced in November? of 2009 and that's when things really went south, and fast. My mother literally got knocked off her rocker, she went absolutely mental, started accusing my father of domestic abuse and and my middle brother of abuse as well. She tried to get my father locked up for domestic abuse and she succeeded in getting my middle brother locked up in juvie a lot of times. I always remember the cops showing up at the door because my mother had called them based off of false accusations against my father and middle brother.

Don't get me wrong, my brother is mental and my father isn't perfect by any means, and I'm not defending anyone, i'm just simply stating that my mother is the master of false accusations and being two-faced. She is always playing the victim and I had grown up seeing this as normal and didn't know any better. I didn't know that my mother and father hitting each other wasn't normal, that the cops showing up at my house more than once a month asking to speak to either my father or brother wasn't normal. I had grown up thinking this was just fine and dandy, normal family business.

One particularly stressful night was when my father had come home later than he said he would be arriving and my mother had automatically jumped to the conclusion that he was out cheating and started hitting him and throwing things. My brother seeing this got all riled up and joined in on the action, but instead of just targeting one person he targeted everyone and specifically me. He would throw things at me, threaten to kill me all the time, and hurt me physically and mentally. He learned all that from my mother, which doesn't make that his fault but it also doesn't excuse his behavior.

My mother grabbed me off the floor and shoved me into the van, and we took off to the neighborhood Burger King on the RCW 13.50.100. We stayed the night in the parking lot and the next day went back home. My mother pretending everything was fine and like nothing major had happened the night before.

It was always these things that happened, she was always starting things and then playing the victim afterwards and pretending it never happened. She loved to take video recordings or audio recordings falsely claiming things. For one instance, she took a video recording I believe, claiming that my father was hitting her and you could hear her screaming for my father to "get off her" when he was across the room telling her to knock it off. She then panned then camera down to show the bruises and scratch marks she left on herself claiming that my father did it to her.

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I would also like to file a dependency on myself, I don't know how that works but i'll get in contact with someone who does.

I am scheduling a phone call with her to gather more information, and understand your current position with the agency. Please let me know if you have any ideas of how we can help her.

Warmest Regards,

Michelle Caldier State Representative 26th Legislative District

((360) 786-7802

* Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov

Sulelle Caldier

Sign Up for my e-newsletter!		

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA)
Date: 10/26/2017 3:56:38 PM
Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

My thanks! C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2017 8:51 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>; Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA)

<TayloReS@dshs.wa.gov>; Gunnell, Kim (DSHS/CA) <MowerKL@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) <HitchED@dshs.wa.gov>; Harder, Diana (DSHS/CA) <hardedx@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Yes,

I will do this.

Diane Craker

Constituent Relations Program Manager

Executive Staff Division

Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

360 902-8060 <u>crakedr@dshs.wa.gov</u>

Tell us how we are doing by clicking on the link and taking this short anonymous survey https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CAESDSURVEY

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2017 8:50 AM

To: Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA) < CrakeDr@dshs.wa.gov >; Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) < TayloReS@dshs.wa.gov >;

Gunnell, Kim (DSHS/CA) < MowerKL@dshs.wa.gov">MowerKL@dshs.wa.gov

Cc: Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) < HitchED@dshs.wa.gov >; Harder, Diana (DSHS/CA) < hardedx@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: FW: Constituent Issue

Hello ladies....

See below. I got this same message (before the placement change) from Ross Hunter....to whom Rep Caldier sent her initial message. I have attached that message and the information I received from the AA. Will you please assist me in drafting a response for the Rep. There is so much more to the story that we cannot share.....sadly. Thanks for your help. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Caldier, Rep. Michelle [mailto:Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 7:24 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Constituent Issue

Connie,

I received the following email from a student in County and wanted to share it with you.

It started on October 9, 2017. I was coming into my school, RCW 13.50.100 High School, for an emergency meeting with my counselor that my mother had set up because I had gotten in trouble with her. We get into the conference room and I couldn't deal with the lies that my mother was spewing and me always covering her up or keeping my mouth shut whenever she told me to. I blew up because I got so angry and I guess I said some things that had concerned my counselor enough that she pulled me aside and wanted to talk to me alone. When she pulled me aside I had broken down, sobbing and having a panic attack. I told her everything my mother did to me and was doing to me.

Every since I can remember my mother has always been dramatically up and down with her mood swings. She was a narcissistic, she still is, but that made it difficult on my family's life. She got diagnosed as about 10 years or so ago, and has always refused to admit it. She has spent the last 10 years denying that she is she will obviously think she doesn't have any problems.

Back to things, my parents got divorced in November? of 2009 and that's when things really went south, and fast. My mother literally got knocked off her rocker, she went absolutely mental, started accusing my father of domestic abuse and and my middle brother of abuse as well. She tried to get my father locked up for domestic abuse and she succeeded in getting my middle brother locked up in juvie a lot of times. I always remember the cops showing up at the door because my mother had called them based off of false accusations against my father and middle brother.

Don't get me wrong, my brother is mental and my father isn't perfect by any means, and I'm not defending anyone, i'm just simply stating that my mother is the master of false accusations and being two-faced. She is always playing the victim and I had grown up seeing this as normal and didn't know any better. I didn't know that my mother and father hitting each other wasn't normal, that the cops showing up at my house more than once a month asking to speak to either my father or brother wasn't normal. I had grown up thinking this was just fine and dandy, normal family business.

One particularly stressful night was when my father had come home later than he said he would be arriving and my mother had automatically jumped to the conclusion that he was out cheating and started hitting him and throwing things. My brother seeing this got all riled up and joined in on the action, but instead of just targeting one person he targeted everyone and specifically me. He would throw things at me, threaten to kill me all the time, and hurt me physically and mentally. He learned all that from my mother, which doesn't make that his fault but it also doesn't excuse his behavior.

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It was always these things that happened, she was always starting things and then playing the victim afterwards and pretending it never happened. She loved to take video recordings or audio recordings falsely claiming things. For one instance, she took a video recording I believe, claiming that my father was hitting her and you could hear her screaming for my father to "get off her" when he was across the room telling her to knock it off. She then panned then camera down to show the bruises and scratch marks she left on herself claiming that my father did it to her.

She didn't even protect me when my brother was RCW 13.50.100 me in 2010. She claimed I was saying it for attention and that I was making things up. He stop it.

This is just a little glimpse of what it was like in the daily life.

Back to October 9th, when I shared all this with my counselor, she immediately called the police and then

the police came and asked me to tell them everything I had already shared with. Then the police asked me what I wanted to do, If I wanted to go back home with my mother, or get placed in foster care. I chose foster care because I do not feel safe at home. She can literally snap at any second and hurt me or even worse. She was always playing mind games with me and it was like walking on eggshells around her. I didn't know what to say, when to say it and if I was going to trigger her and she would hit me or play with my head for days on end. I had RCW 70.02.020 around her and I was RCW 70.02.020

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I'm sorry to use to words but its the only way to express the way she does things.

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I would also like to file a dependency on myself, I don't know how that works but i'll get in contact with someone who does.

After this child contacted my office via email, we are told that her case worker would not allow her to contact me again and would not allow access to the internet. She left a voicemail and we learned today that she was removed from the foster home and placed in a therapeutic foster home instead. It is my understanding that the child has not been provided legal representation, and the foster mother fears retaliation from the case worker. Please let me know what steps I need to take to ensure the teen is able to receive the best and safest outcome.

Warmest Regards,

Michelle Caldier

State Representative 26th Legislative District

(360) 786-7802

* Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov

whelle Caldier

From: Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA)

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 10/26/2017 4:00:04 PM Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

FYI:

Change of plans. Becky is familiar with this case and will follow up.

Diane Craker

Constituent Relations Program Manager

Executive Staff Division

Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

360 902-8060 crakedr@dshs.wa.gov

Tell us how we are doing by clicking on the link and taking this short anonymous survey

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CAESDSURVEY

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2017 8:57 AM

To: Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA) < CrakeDr@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

My thanks! C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration Washington State Department of Social and Health Services 360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2017 8:51 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >; Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA)

<<u>TayloReS@dshs.wa.gov</u>>; Gunnell, Kim (DSHS/CA) <<u>MowerKL@dshs.wa.gov</u>>

Cc: Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) < hitchED@dshs.wa.gov >; Harder, Diana (DSHS/CA) < hardedx@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Yes.

I will do this.

Diane Craker

Constituent Relations Program Manager

Executive Staff Division Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

360 902-8060 crakedr@dshs.wa.gov

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From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2017 8:50 AM

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal

DCYF - 002434

To: Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA) < <u>CrakeDr@dshs.wa.gov</u>>; Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) < <u>TayloReS@dshs.wa.gov</u>>; Gunnell, Kim (DSHS/CA) < <u>MowerKL@dshs.wa.gov</u>>

Cc: Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) < https://example.com/hitched-@dshs.wa.gov ; Harder, Diana (DSHS/CA) < <a href="https://example.com/hitched-widt

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Children's Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
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Transforming Lives

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After this child contacted my office via email, we are told that her case worker would not allow her to contact me again and would not allow access to the internet. She left a voicemail and we learned today that she was removed from the foster home and placed in a therapeutic foster home instead. It is my understanding that the child has not been provided legal representation, and the foster mother fears retaliation from the case worker. Please let me know what steps I need to take to ensure the teen is able to receive the best and safest outcome.

Warmest Regards,

Michelle Caldier
State Representative
26th Legislative District

Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra 201805-PRR-261 / Appeal DCYF - 002436

Sulelle Caldier

(360) 786-7802

* <u>Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov</u>

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA)

Date: 10/26/2017 6:20:03 PM Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Nicely done and thank you, Becky!!! C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA)

Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2017 11:01 AM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) <LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) <HitchED@dshs.wa.gov>; Harder, Diana (DSHS/CA) <hardedx@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Good morning,

Please see attached letter and let me know if you have any questions or want additional information in the letter. Thank you,

Rebecca Taylor, MSW/Constituent Relations Program Manager/Executive Staff Division

Children's Administration

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

360-902-8352/ taylores@dshs.wa.gov

Tell us how we are doing by clicking on the link and taking this short anonymous survey https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CAESDSURVEY

Transforming Lives

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2017 8:50 AM

To: Craker, Diane (DSHS/CA) < CrakeDr@dshs.wa.gov >; Taylor, Rebecca S. (DSHS/CA) < TayloReS@dshs.wa.gov >;

Gunnell, Kim (DSHS/CA) < MowerKL@dshs.wa.gov>

Cc: Hitchings, Edith (DSHS/CA) < hitchED@dshs.wa.gov >; Harder, Diana (DSHS/CA) < hardedx@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: FW: Constituent Issue

Hello ladies....

See below. I got this same message (before the placement change) from Ross Hunter....to whom Rep Caldier sent her initial message. I have attached that message and the information I received from the AA. Will you please assist me in drafting a response for the Rep. There is so much more to the story that we cannot share.....sadly. Thanks for your help. C.

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Caldier, Rep. Michelle [mailto:Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 7:24 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >

Subject: Constituent Issue

Connie,

I received the following email from a student in County and wanted to share it with you.

It started on October 9, 2017. I was coming into my school, RCW 13.50.100 High School, for an emergency meeting with my counselor that my mother had set up because I had gotten in trouble with her. We get into the conference room and I couldn't deal with the lies that my mother was spewing and me always covering her up or keeping my mouth shut whenever she told me to. I blew up because I got so angry and I guess I said some things that had concerned my counselor enough that she pulled me aside and wanted to talk to me alone. When she pulled me aside I had broken down, sobbing and having a panic attack. I told her everything my mother did to me and was doing to me.

Every since I can remember my mother has always been dramatically up and down with her mood swings. She was a narcissistic, she still is, but that made it difficult on my family's life. She got diagnosed as about 10 years or so ago, and has always refused to admit it. She has spent the last 10 years denying that she is she will obviously think she doesn't have any problems.

Back to things, my parents got divorced in November? of 2009 and that's when things really went south, and fast. My mother literally got knocked off her rocker, she went absolutely mental, started accusing my father of domestic abuse and and my middle brother of abuse as well. She tried to get my father locked up for domestic abuse and she succeeded in getting my middle brother locked up in juvie a lot of times. I always remember the cops showing up at the door because my mother had called them based off of false accusations against my father and middle brother.

Don't get me wrong, my brother is mental and my father isn't perfect by any means, and I'm not defending anyone, i'm just simply stating that my mother is the master of false accusations and being two-faced. She is always playing the victim and I had grown up seeing this as normal and didn't know any better. I didn't know that my mother and father hitting each other wasn't normal, that the cops showing up at my house more than once a month asking to speak to either my father or brother wasn't normal. I had grown up thinking this was just fine and dandy, normal family business.

One particularly stressful night was when my father had come home later than he said he would be arriving and my mother had automatically jumped to the conclusion that he was out cheating and started hitting him and throwing things. My brother seeing this got all riled up and joined in on the action, but instead of just targeting one person he targeted everyone and specifically me. He would throw things at me, threaten to kill me all the time, and hurt me physically and mentally. He learned all that from my mother, which doesn't make that his fault but it also doesn't excuse his behavior.

My mother grabbed me off the floor and shoved me into the van, and we took off to the neighborhood Burger King on the RCW 13.50.100. We stayed the night in the parking lot and the next day went back home. My mother pretending everything was fine and like nothing major had happened the night before.

It was always these things that happened, she was always starting things and then playing the victim afterwards and pretending it never happened. She loved to take video recordings or audio recordings falsely claiming things. For one instance, she took a video recording I believe, claiming that my father was hitting her and you could hear her screaming for my father to "get off her" when he was across the room telling her to knock it off. She then panned then camera down to show the bruises and scratch marks she left on herself claiming that my father did it to her.

She didn't even protect me when my brother was RCW 13.50.100 me in 2010. She claimed I was saying it for attention and that I was making things up. He RCW 13.50.100 me for three years and she did nothing to stop it.

This is just a little glimpse of what it was like in the daily life.

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I didn't know what to do so on Friday October 6th, and Saturday October 7th, I had tried running away in the middle of the night. Both nights I was caught and couldn't leave. I can't handle my mother, I become I have RCW 70.02.020, and I cannot deal with the mind fuckery that my mother puts me through. I'm sorry to use to words but its the only way to express the way she does things.

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Warmest Regards,

Michelle Caldier

State Representative 26th Legislative District

(360) 786-7802

* Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov

whelle Caldier.

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

To: Caldier, Rep. Michelle
Date: 10/26/2017 7:05:44 PM
Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Dear Representative Caldier,

Thank you for bringing this case to my attention. We are committed to reviewing our work and making decisions with a focus on child safety and wellbeing.

This case has been thoroughly reviewed. The child's perspective is always heavily considered; there are also additional factors that must be taken into account. Due to confidentiality laws, without a signed release of information, I am unable to share any case details with you.

Regarding your concerns of legal representation for the child, **if** there is court oversight, all children age 12 and older are asked if they would like legal representation. If the child does want an attorney assigned to them, our policy requires the social worker to assist them in obtaining legal representation.

Please have this child contact Rebecca Taylor with Constituent Relations at 360-902-8352. Ms. Taylor is familiar with the case and can answer her questions and help address her concerns. This same option certainly exists for the involved caregiver. Contact with the Ombuds is also encouraged. Again, there are aspects to this matter that I cannot speak to and I keenly understand any frustration at only hearing one side of the story.

Thank you for your strong advocacy for children involved in Washington State's child welfare system. You are appreciated!

With warm regard, Connie.

Ombuds: http://www.ofco.wa.gov/

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Caldier, Rep. Michelle [mailto:Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 7:24 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov>

Subject: Constituent Issue

Connie,

I received the following email from a student in County and wanted to share it with you.

It started on October 9, 2017. I was coming into my school, RCW 13.50.100 High School, for an emergency meeting with my counselor that my mother had set up because I had gotten in trouble with her. We get into the conference room and I couldn't deal with the lies that my mother was spewing and me always covering her up or keeping my mouth shut whenever she told me to. I blew up because I got so angry and I guess I said some things that had concerned my counselor enough that she pulled me aside and wanted to talk to me alone. When she pulled me aside I had broken down, sobbing and having a panic attack. I told her everything my mother did to me and was doing to me.

Every since I can remember my mother has always been dramatically up and down with her mood swings. She was a narcissistic, she still is, but that made it difficult on my family's life. She got diagnosed as about 10 years or so ago, and has always refused to admit it. She has spent the last 10 years denying that she will obviously think she doesn't have any problems.

Back to things, my parents got divorced in November? of 2009 and that's when things really went south, and fast. My mother literally got knocked off her rocker, she went absolutely mental, started accusing my father of domestic abuse and and my middle brother of abuse as well. She tried to get my father locked up for domestic abuse and she succeeded in getting my middle brother locked up in juvie a lot of times. I always remember the cops showing up at the door because my mother had called them based off of false accusations against my father and middle brother.

Don't get me wrong, my brother is mental and my father isn't perfect by any means, and I'm not defending anyone, i'm just simply stating that my mother is the master of false accusations and being two-faced. She is always playing the victim and I had grown up seeing this as normal and didn't know any better. I didn't know that my mother and father hitting each other wasn't normal, that the cops showing up at my house more than once a month asking to speak to either my father or brother wasn't normal. I had grown up thinking this was just fine and dandy, normal family business.

One particularly stressful night was when my father had come home later than he said he would be arriving and my mother had automatically jumped to the conclusion that he was out cheating and started hitting him and throwing things. My brother seeing this got all riled up and joined in on the action, but instead of just targeting one person he targeted everyone and specifically me. He would throw things at me, threaten to kill me all the time, and hurt me physically and mentally. He learned all that from my mother, which doesn't make that his fault but it also doesn't excuse his behavior.

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It was always these things that happened, she was always starting things and then playing the victim afterwards and pretending it never happened. She loved to take video recordings or audio recordings falsely claiming things. For one instance, she took a video recording I believe, claiming that my father was hitting her and you could hear her screaming for my father to "get off her" when he was across the room telling her to knock it off. She then panned then camera down to show the bruises and scratch marks she left on herself claiming that my father did it to her.

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They are wanting to send me back and I don't think I have the mental capacity to handle that. They still Investigate West / Abramo, Allegra

haven't given me an attorney, and I would very much like one.
I would also like to file a dependency on myself, I don't know how that works but i'll get in contact with someone who does.

After this child contacted my office via email, we are told that her case worker would not allow her to contact me again and would not allow access to the internet. She left a voicemail and we learned today that she was removed from the foster home and placed in a therapeutic foster home instead. It is my understanding that the child has not been provided legal representation, and the foster mother fears retaliation from the case worker. Please let me know what steps I need to take to ensure the teen is able to receive the best and safest outcome.

Warmest Regards,

Michelle Caldier

State Representative 26th Legislative District

(360) 786-7802

* Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov

From: Caldier, Rep. Michelle < Michelle. Caldier@leg.wa.gov>

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA)

Date: 10/30/2017 7:18:05 PM Subject: RE: Constituent Issue

Connie,

Thank you for your reply. My office received the following email from the student that I emailed you about last week:

Any days would be fine. They moved me to a "therapeutic" home for reasons beyond me. I was really happy in my previous home and then they up and moved me to another home claiming that I needed help. I am on strict lockdown, I can't have any internet access so therefore I am doing all this in the school. I can't leave the house unsupervised and I can't have any internet access.

At this point I really don't know what to do. They aren't allowing me any contact with my last foster mother, whom I really liked being with and had a stable environment RCW 70.02.020, and then they move me out of the blue during school, to another home RCW 70.02.020. I have no stability and you would think that someone with RCW 70.02.020 would at least get some stability and routine.

RCW 13.50.100 . All I know is that I cannot go back to my mother, that is the last thing I want and I will go to extreme measures to avoid that.

I can meet anytime after 2:30 in the afternoon. I'll give you my social workers number and maybe you guys can work something out.

Greg Fontenelle (social worker): 360-917-5848

Thank you,

I don't want to cause any issues in this case, but I would like to meet with her if possible. Please let me know if it would be inappropriate to contact her social worker to arrange a meeting.

Warmest Regards,

State Representative 26th Legislative District ((360) 786-7802

* Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov

Sign Up for my e-newsletter!

From: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) [mailto:LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov]

Sent: Thursday, October 26, 2017 12:06 PM

To: Caldier, Rep. Michelle < Michelle. Caldier@leg.wa.gov > Abramo. Allegra

De Caldier

201805-PRR-261 / Appeal

DCYF - 002444

Cc: Harder, Diana (DSHS/CA) < hardedx@dshs.wa.gov">hardedx@dshs.wa.gov>; Del Villar Fox, David (DSHS/CA) < delvida@dshs.wa.gov> **Subject:** RE: Constituent Issue

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Ombuds: http://www.ofco.wa.gov/

Connie Lambert-Eckel, Acting Assistant Secretary

Children's Administration
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
360-902-7820 / lambecm@dshs.wa.gov

Transforming Lives

From: Caldier, Rep. Michelle [mailto:Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 7:24 PM

To: Lambert-Eckel, Connie (DSHS/CA) < LambeCM@dshs.wa.gov >

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Michelle Caldier

State Representative 26th Legislative District

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* Michelle.Caldier@leg.wa.gov

whelle Caldier